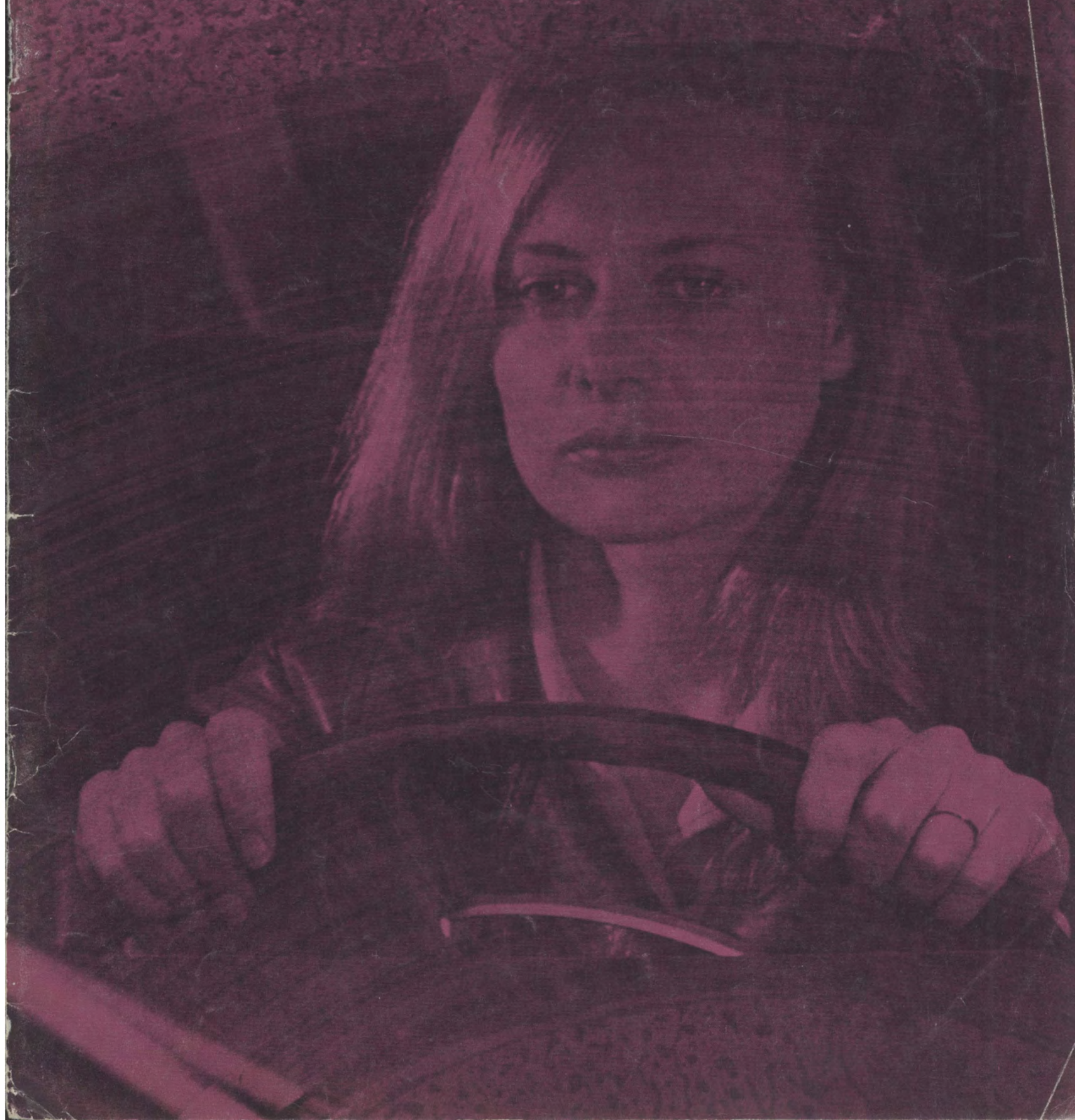


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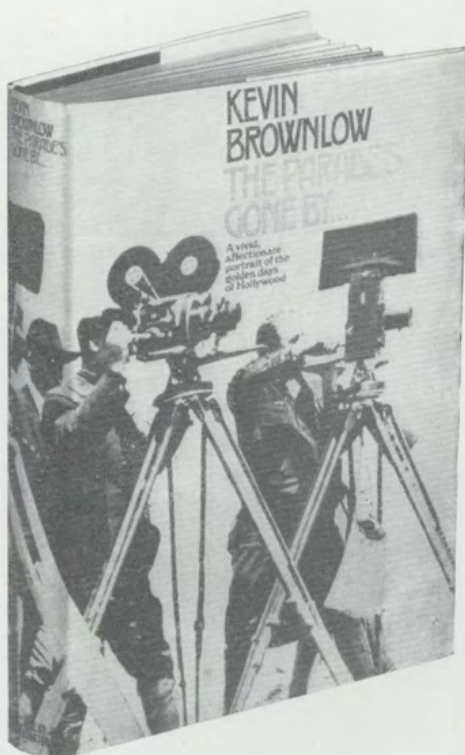
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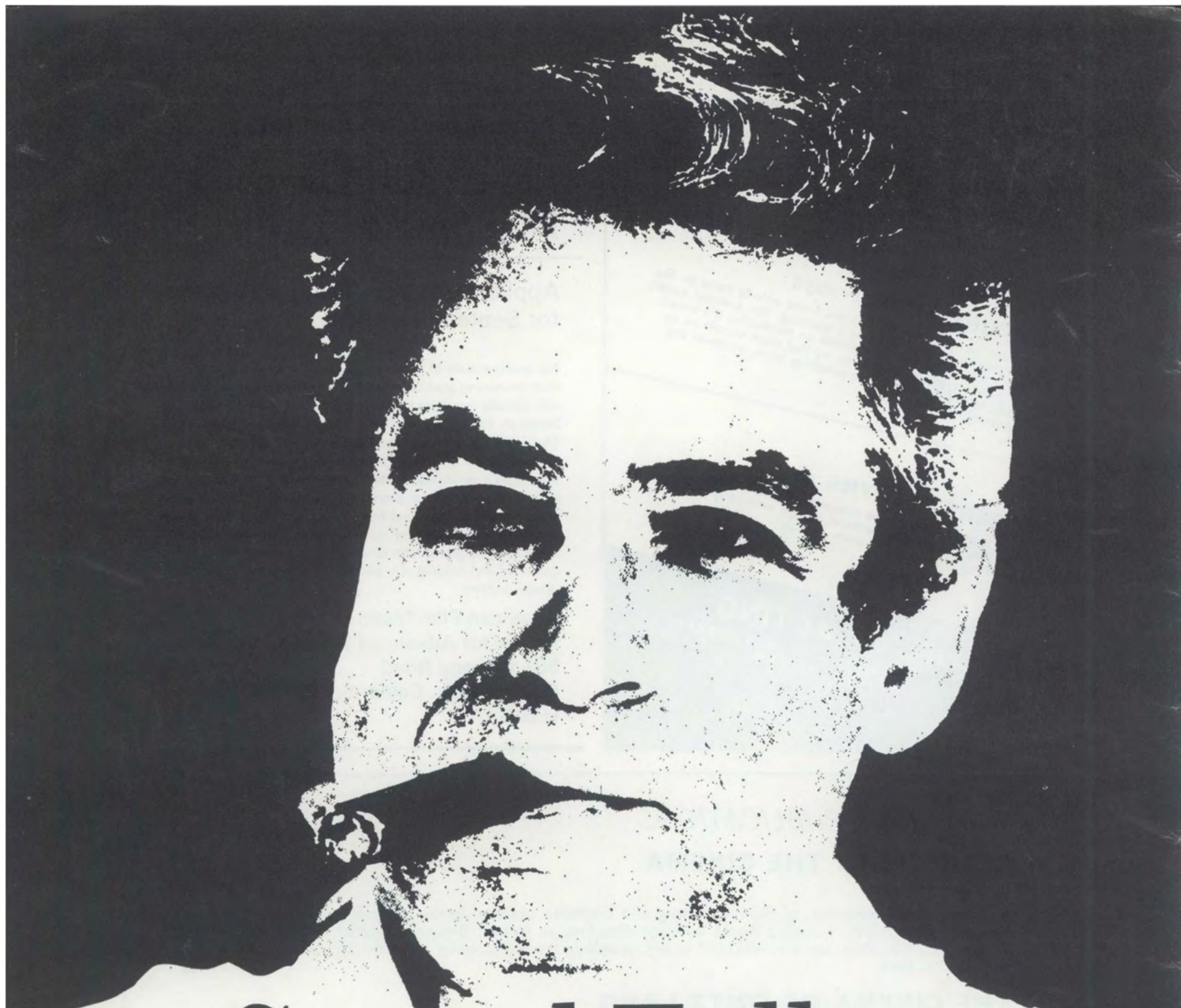
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THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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BACKING



BRITAIN

John Russell Taylor



BACKING



BRITAIN



TELEVISION CAN THROW up weird confrontations, and not the least weird recently was that devised by the BBC as their frame for reporting this year's Oscar ceremony. A selection of highlights from the show, intercut with bits and pieces from the films concerned, was prefaced by a round of studio introductions and a warning that the four assembled experts, Bryan Forbes, John Boorman, Eric Rhode and Ron Moody, would be discussing the whole business of Oscars and their significance in the modern world afterwards. Why? Well, primarily because *Oliver!*, a British film (albeit largely American financed), had won a number of awards, including Best Film and Best Director, and *Omnibus* wanted to know whether this coup made those on hand feel kinda warm inside just to be British, as well as whether they saw this as a sign that the British cinema at large was heading for bigger and better triumphs in America.

Not surprisingly, nobody actually had much to say directly on the subject. Bryan Forbes, just announced as the new white hope of British cinema in his role of resuscitator for a new-look ABPC, saw some hope in the success of this fairly healthy family entertainment, and had a chance to explain what he had and hadn't said about the 'pornography of violence' in films and his intentions of steering clear of it in the films to be made under his rule. John Boorman felt that he was a director who made films wherever the subjects took him: Bath and West for *Catch Us If You Can*, California for *Point Blank*, the South Seas for *Hell in the Pacific*, and now London for his latest. He didn't see much point in talking about British cinema or American cinema as self-contained entities any more. Nor, when you actually came down to it, did anyone else, or so it seemed.

And yet there has been a great deal of talk in recent months in precisely these terms. The British cinema, is it being debilitated by American finance? The British cinema, can it survive without American finance? Does it make much difference where the money comes from anyway? If it does, what do we think is so good and so special about specifically British British cinema? These questions have been argued over endlessly, if to little sensible conclusion.

It was hoped that Jack Valenti, President of the Motion Picture Association of America, might provide some answer to the most pressing immediate question, about the practical future for American film finance, during his John Player lecture at the National Film Theatre in April. But as might have been expected, Mr. Valenti diplomatically side-stepped that issue. He did not think, it seemed, that new governmental measures in America would necessarily mean a cutting-back in foreign financial commitments. As to whether, government discouragement or no, American film producers were likely to go on investing in Britain, he could not really say. But with our great reservoirs of talent we should be in a good position, especially now that researches proved conclusively a direct correlation between education and filmgoing: the better educated you were, the more often you went to the cinema. This meant that audiences worldwide, and particularly in the United States, were becoming more and more ready to accept the sort of off-beat, intelligent cinema Britain could provide.

All of which sounded very flattering, especially when backed up with a list of intelligent, moderately budgeted British films which had grossed their original cost, and sometimes quite a bit more, in America alone. As it happens this list raises more questions than it answers, especially since the producers of one or two of the films—the list included *Alfie*, *The Bliss of Mrs. Blossom*, *The Bofors Gun*, *Charlie Bubbles*, *How I Won the War*, *Inadmissible Evidence*, *To Sir, With Love*, *Up the Junction*, *Georgy Girl* and *Poor Cow*—assure me that they have done nothing like recoup their cost to date.

Meanwhile, how about a big budget film like *Isadora*? Will

that do well enough internationally, or is Britain destined to feature in American books as the prime producer of those risky, off-beat films which are, say what else you will about them, fairly cheap? And even supposing that *If . . .*, say, makes a packet, how far can you build a whole programme of film-making on something which is so inescapably *sui generis*? If *The Graduate* has taught Hollywood anything (apart from how to make imitations by the dozen), is it not perhaps that they can make their own European-type, intelligent off-beat successes? And if so, what will they want to come to Europe for, now that we no longer have the monopoly in that sort of thing? Puzzling questions indeed, but questions, it seemed, to which it might be possible to find some sort of answer, and conceivably clues to the future, by studying what American film finance has recently been up to over here.

\* \* \*

If one checks through the films made in Britain during the last two or three years, the heyday of American financial participation in the British cinema, by the leading American companies, one finds some curious discrepancies. With many of the companies the general impression is one of confusion. Not necessarily unprofitable confusion, either in terms of money made or in terms of artistic achievement; but certainly there is a feeling that the films, good, bad and indifferent, were made one by one, as the idea came up, with no informing principle, no overall programme beyond. You might be hard put to it to trace a coherent policy, for instance, linking such European-based, English-speaking Fox films as *Bedazzled*, *Prudence and the Pill*, *Decline and Fall*, *A Flea in Her Ear*, *Deadfall*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *Joanna*. By and large it is not a bad record. But there is little there that makes one wonder if one man was responsible for the decision to make them all, or to seek out such a man and ask him what exactly he had in mind.

Two exceptions, undoubtedly, are Universal and Paramount. In each case there seems to be a coherent policy at work, a coherent pattern which emerges if you put the companies' British-based products together and compare them with the Hollywood-based products of the same companies in the same period. Very broadly, each company seems to make a wider variety of films in Hollywood, with a few very big ones, a number of middle-range films which are big mainly by virtue of having John Wayne or Kirk Douglas or Jack Lemmon or Doris Day in them, and a lot of basic programmers, bread-and-butter films or whatever you like to call them. In Britain, on the other hand, the emphasis is almost entirely on the middle range. Few real spectacles (one each: *Half a Sixpence* and *Isadora*), few big star films, but on the other hand no straight programmers. Virtually all the films made over here by these two companies are in some way, or at least have the ambition to be, rather special: off-beat in subject-matter or casting, unusually sophisticated and literate in their approach to their material, evidently unpredictable in their audience appeal (even in a world where nothing can be predicted with much certainty any more).

In each case, therefore, it seems relevant to wonder about the company's British programme as a whole, and to look for some co-ordinating intelligence behind it. Which is how I came to talk to Jay Kanter and Michael Flint. Jay Kanter, American, 42, with MCA for 22 years, was in charge of European feature production for Universal from the initiation of the programme until early this year; he is now with Jerry Gershwin-Elliott Kastner Productions and at the time of writing no successor has been appointed for him at Universal. Michael Flint, 37, British; an ex-lawyer who joined Paramount in 1966, was made a vice-president last year and has been number two in Paramount's European productions for a



couple of years before taking over as executive in charge, which he now is.

Both have been important policy-makers, and both are very articulate about the policies they have made, how far they think they have worked, and where and in what way they may have gone wrong. Their views make an interesting comparison. In comparing them it should probably be remembered that at the period in question Paramount's European side was obviously riding high with *If . . .* and *Oh! What a Lovely War* just for starters, while Universal was in a state of transition and some uncertainty; it should also be remembered, though, that much in the film world is a matter of sheer chance, and it is by no means unthinkable that Universal might have backed *If . . .* and *Oh! What a Lovely War*, so that the positions would have been reversed.

In the course of conversation with Jay Kanter and Michael Flint inevitably many of the same questions came up. Let me tabulate a few of them.

*How far did you think of your British films from the start as a programme? What kinds of films did you want to make, or not want to make?*

KANTER: Very much as a programme. Obviously the films I decided to back represent my own tastes and interests, and the mistakes are fundamentally my own mistakes. I guess to begin with I didn't want to make any old movies, ordinary run-of-the-mill movies, just to fill out some quota. I don't see the percentage in that anywhere any more. You can't play safe, because there isn't any safe to play. I didn't, either, set out deliberately to make art-house type movies. The Chaplin film, for instance. Leave Chaplin himself out of account, think of it simply as a light romantic comedy with Marlon Brando and Sophia Loren, and there doesn't sound to be anything 'art-house' about that. *Fahrenheit 451* was a bit more risky, but there again basically you have a science-fiction story, not too obscure, with two stars who at the time were likely bets for American popularity, Oskar Werner after *Ship of Fools* and Julie Christie, as it turned out, about to win an Oscar for *Darling*. I saw *Charlie Bubbles*, on the other hand, as a minority film, but thought that it could be realistically budgeted as such. If the other two turned out as 'art-house' films, that was an accident or a miscalculation; it certainly wasn't built into their conception.

FLINT: Part of a programme, but not really a programme on their own. When the new people took over at Paramount, there wasn't very much around in the way of product. What was first needed was films, in fair numbers, to keep things ticking over. But Gulf and Western did a remarkable—and at the time alarming—thing. They informed all the companies they control—paper-making, steel, chemicals, as well as film-making—that they wanted to see our plans, at least in terms of trends, aims, and overall 'thinking', for the next five years and the next one year. Everyone said that films had never been made that way, but Gulf and Western couldn't see why not, and once we got down to thinking things through, I think the exercise was enormously salutary. Even when we started off with ideas which have proved impracticable, or have had to be revised radically as the situation has changed.

For instance, we started thinking of our films in three groups, which we called the roadshows, the locomotives and the freight-trains. The freight-trains were the bread-and-butter pictures. The locomotives were those which would really carry weight with exhibitors, and eventually television networks buying batches of our films, by virtue of stars or production values. Obviously the locomotives were what would make the stream of freight-trains acceptable, especially when supplemented with a few block-busting roadshows in prospect. This programme idea seemed all very well in theory, and was, then. But things have changed; in particular the return to favour in the States of original television material, and the relative slump in ratings of cinema films on television, has meant that the selling price of films to television has dropped, and made this a minor part of our calculations.

Every film we make now has to be budgeted in terms of the cinema, to pay off through theatrical showings. And this has meant dropping the hard-and-fast distinction between loco-

motives and freight-trains, which was always rather a nuisance as far as British productions were concerned. You see, we made few roadshows over here (*Half a Sixpence* sort of escalated, but was not originally seen in those terms), and hardly any star attractions because there were few native stars who meant that much at the box-office, nationally or internationally. On the other hand there was no tradition of formula filming to make up a programme of freight-trains. So most of our British productions at that time fell awkwardly between being a smallish locomotive and a superior freight-train. A film like *The Assassination Bureau*, for instance, cost as much as it did because it was decided that it must be a locomotive, and we laboured under the delusion that this could be ensured by spending more on 'production values'.

Now we have a more flexible view, in which each film has to be budgeted in terms of what we think its individual potential to be, without reference to any preconceived categories. And this new freedom tends to benefit British productions, simply because, for all sorts of reasons, they are likely, in the context of American company policy, to be rather special cases anyway. 'Art-house movies'? That certainly not. Never. It's an entirely fictitious concept, based on the supposed existence of an 'art-house circuit' which in fact does not exist and never has. 'Art-house' has just become a pejorative term for films that fail to be anything else. Our films are always intended to make their way commercially; but fortunately there are now so many ways of making out commercially, so many different audiences within the mass of the filmgoing public—and outside it, for that matter.

*How far have you thought of your films as 'British' first and foremost?*

KANTER: Very much so. In some ways this has perhaps been our biggest misconception. We started out thinking in terms of making films which would be British and would be specially saleable on the British market. We hoped that the tie-up with Rank for distribution would help us here. Of course we had no guarantee that our films would be booked by Rank, and we would not want one: each film should make its way on its own merits. But supposing that the film was of some positive quality, we might hope that the British market would be specially attuned to it, and that, if it was fairly inexpensive, it would make a sizeable dent in its production costs, or even pay them off, in Britain alone.

But of course the failure of several of our films to get any really significant showing in Britain has had repercussions back in Hollywood: the people there say, "My God, you're supposed to be making British films, and you can't even sell them to the British. How can you expect to sell them anywhere else?" There are answers, good answers, but it's hard to make them sound convincing. Yet I'm sure that in principle we are right. Of the eighteen or nineteen pictures we have made in Europe I think there are only perhaps two I regret, and one was a picture we made in France and tried to make in an English version at the same time. If we'd been more local in our thinking I believe it would have worked out better.

FLINT: Not at all. We did a lot of research on this. We have companies in France, Italy, Spain, and now just starting up in Germany. In each of these countries we find that the best thing in general is to think unashamedly in local terms. There are certain basic types of film which are virtually money in the bank: get Alberto Sordi in a comedy, budget it within certain limits, and you will make a handsome profit in Italy alone, with any takings from the rest of the world as so much gilt on the gingerbread. Naturally we were inclined to suppose that the same would be true in Britain, but we find it just isn't. Except for the 'Carry Ons', and one or two similar things on a low budget, it is virtually impossible to make a British film primarily to sell to a British public. Occasionally you get a lucky chance, like *If . . .* and by the look of it like *Oh! What a Lovely War*, which strikes a particular chord with British audiences. But if you relied on this, if you built a whole programme on it, you'd be dead before you started. You have to think of English-speaking cinema as a whole, with individual



films made in one country or another, with actors and technicians of this or that nationality, entirely according to their individual story requirements, an intricate web of financial considerations, and so on.

*What, then, is in your view the particular advantage of making films in Britain?*

KANTER: The reservoir of talent: actors, writers, directors. And of course some financial advantages, though the cost gap between making a film here and making the equivalent in the States is always narrowing. Basically, you are offered more exciting ideas for films over here, and you have greater flexibility in the ideas you can accept and develop because there is no tradition here of what is safe and what isn't. It's a more risky but a more stimulating climate for film-making.

FLINT: If the subject is essentially British in background and characterisation, then you make it here. From the Hollywood point of view, remember, there is not that much difference between filming in Oregon and filming in Britain: as soon as you get outside that magic circle of Hollywood Hills the Hollywood old-timers start to worry. But if you are going to make films with exotic backgrounds, as everyone does nowa-

here and now to have that money in my hand rather than gamble on a problematic future. Of course, if the film then went on to gross a million over here, I would have made the wrong decision. It would depend very much on my judgment of the likely British market for the film. If it was a James Bond and I calculated it would cost 200,000 extra to make it British, I would say it was worth it every time. On the other hand, you have to remember that Eady money is a percentage return of tax on takings, so it depends on there being takings to begin with. A big percentage of nothing is still nothing.

FLINT: Eady money comes fairly low down the list, say fourth or fifth. For one thing you don't have that much flexibility on most films; there are only a very few that leave you any choice. But on the other hand I think it would be disastrous if this were to encourage the government to go through with any reducing of Eady money, as there have been rumours they might. Psychologically this would be a slap in the face for American financial interests, and they would immediately start saying, "Why make it in Britain, when in Italy or France you get this concession, that tax relief, etc. etc.?" For us in the thick of things here Eady money, though of course worth picking up if you can, is unlikely to be the first consideration;



JUDY GEESON ON THE SET OF "THREE INTO TWO WON'T GO", PETER HALL'S NEW FILM FOR UNIVERSAL RELEASE.

days, Britain is the best place after Hollywood to do it: you have the studios, the equipment, the talent, and they all speak English. And it is still a bit cheaper than in America. A film like *2001*, for instance, probably couldn't be made in the States now because it would just cost too much. And Britain is the ideal place now for making fairly modest-budget English-speaking films; if you try to make an inexpensive English-speaking film elsewhere in Europe you find the difficulties of shooting in a foreign language automatically put a lump on the budget. (This applies much less with some really big spectacle, which will probably find corresponding advantages, like being able to hire a whole Eastern European army at the stroke of a pen.) But ultimately you always come back to the right place for the subject; apart from maybe *2001* I have yet to come across that mythical beast, the subject that could be shot anywhere at will.

*How about Eady money? How important is that in your calculations?*

KANTER: Not very. There are a few films where it would be a factor in planning. Essentially films are made where they need to be made, but obviously there are some films, combining, say, a proportion of European location with studio work which could be done here or there, where you can decide to make it a British quota film or not. In such cases, it will cost you more to do so: a bigger crew, some doubling up on location and studio units, and so on. Suppose that I calculate it would cost \$150,000 more to make it British, I would then work out that if we grossed \$300,000 domestic over here I would get that \$150,000 back. But probably I would prefer

but in the States it assumes an importance in people's minds out of proportion to its actual cash value.

*If you had to advise an American company now considering going into British production, what advice would you give them?*

KANTER: Don't try to make routine formula films over here. You can do it more reliably in the States, you can buy them ready-made cheaper from Italy or Spain or wherever they are currently turning out quicky imitations of Hollywood product. You have in Britain incredible riches of talent for making exceptional films which may miss completely or may really hit. Use them; if necessary regard your British programme as an assignment of funds for research and experiment, as the big industrial corporations regularly do. Invest in the future of the industry; it will pay off better than you could possibly guess.

FLINT: Don't think in terms of 'British production' at all; there ain't no such animal. Think quite practically in terms of the subject you want to make, the amount you think it should cost in order to get its money back in the cinema, the best casting and crew for this particular subject; and if the answer is Britain, then make it in Britain. If it's Hollywood, make it in Hollywood. And above all, don't keep secrets, so that your left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing. In Paramount the U.S./Europe split is fifty-fifty, and each half knows exactly what the other half is up to. It's the only way we can function on the scale we do. The time when films could be made in little compartments neatly labelled 'Britain', 'America', 'France' and so on has gone for ever, and the sooner we realise it the better for everybody.



# THE HORIZONTAL MAN

Penelope Houston



"SILENCE AND CRY"

THE OPENING SHOT of Miklós Jancsó's *Silence and Cry* is of a high sand dune, so bleached and glittering that at first glance one could take the sand for snow. Walking past are a prisoner and his escort: no doubting the relationship, but they don't seem unfriendly and there is no tension in the air. "Get me a twig from a tree," says the guard. "No, up there," pointing up the dune. The prisoner slowly climbs, leaving great slipping footprints in the soft sand. The guard turns to the man with him: "Well, come on, shoot." And the prisoner topples down the mountain of sand, shot in the back. Up in the sky, a bird is singing.

Unmistakably, we are in Jancsó country. There is a firing squad at work in an empty quarry very early on in *My Way Home*; the first victim in *The Round-Up* is shot in the back, walking away from the camera and the killer; in *The Red and the White* the only difference is that the fugitive is standing in water, backed up against the river bank, facing his executioner. All the killings are completely casual, bloodless and emotionless: the man with the gun has the power, and his victim accepts that he has it, and there is no more than that to be said. There will be no lingering shots of corpses, no mashed limbs, no emphasis on death as a violent fact rather than another move in an endlessly repeated game.

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This, to some critics, has been the most disturbing thing about Jancsó. Patrick Gibbs has called him the "master of the artistic atrocity," which is a fair phrase and summing up of an attitude. I had remembered the reviews of *The Round-Up* as exceptionally and almost unreservedly enthusiastic. When one re-reads them, however, it is to find quite a few people voicing quite a few doubts, which were plainly reinforced for them by the plotless, mechanistic slaughter of *The Red and the White*. (One perhaps excepts, but must preserve, the *Morning Star*'s classic summing up of *The Round-Up*: "The film is worthwhile

for the idea it gives of the conditions the peasants had to endure, and of a period in Hungarian history that is little known in this country.")

But where critics were cool towards *The Red and the White* (by no means all, of course, were) the main complaint was of style thinned to mannerism, a pumping of oxygen out of the dramatic air so that mechanisms can be seen slowly spinning. *The Round-Up* implicated the audience at every point, by forcing us gradually to learn, or to make up for ourselves, the rules of the film's deathly and devious game. Jancsó's tactic of withholding the most ordinary kind of dramatic information, stripping content to the bare bone of action, refusing to explain, justify, psychoanalyse or simply narrate, means that his death trap closes with stunning and atrocious force. The revelation of the trick at the end of *The Round-Up* leaves the audience emotionally winded. A single shot can achieve the same effect, like the most famous one in the picture: a long shot of a prisoner running away across the plain, apparently escaping, unbelievably being *allowed* to escape. Until, from either side of the frame, the horsemen ride out, insolent and unhurried, to bring him in.

Suspense in *The Round-Up* may be coldly intellectual, but there is no doubt that it is there: in trying to work out what the puzzle manoeuvres of the prison authorities signify, and then how they expect to achieve their object of isolating the one rebel group among the anonymous mass of captives. *The Red and the White* removes this mainspring of tension, and with it any audience-attracting urge to identification. In the Russian Civil War of 1918, Reds and Whites fight backwards and forwards like chessmen, never deviating from the moves laid down for them. The men momentarily on top issue the same orders and impose the same laconically callous humiliations; the pawn may win through to become a queen, but he'll be swept off the board in the next move. It is a world so sealed off, threatening and glacial that it makes Bresson (with





"THE RED AND THE WHITE"

whom Jancsó has so often been compared) seem to be positively overflowing with easy human warmth.

With no plot to hold the attention, it would be easy to see it as simply a procession of elegant atrocities and stunning long shots, interrupted by such inevitable Jancsó characters (one wouldn't want to call them symbols) as the naked girl and the riderless horse. But in the wary circumstances of a Russo-Hungarian co-production, Jancsó achieves the same difficult unmasking of legend as in *The Round-Up*: the myths and heroes stripped to detachment, historical circumstance dictating to the White aristos in their tight-buttoned uniforms and the bedraggled Reds. The film is all action and will power; it would be lost—and Jancsó knows it—if it let in the breath of an outside world.

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It is something of a relief, admittedly, to know that Jancsó is capable of something else. *My Way Home* is the earliest of his films to be shown here, though actually his third feature, after a number of shorts and an episode in a feature film. It was made in 1964, when Jancsó was already 43; not a dazzling young discovery, but a man who had graduated as a law student during the war, finished his course at the Budapest Film School in 1950, and only begun to direct features at the end of the Fifties. *Cantata* (1963), the immediate predecessor of *My Way Home*, apparently indicated to the Hungarians that they had a new director to reckon with, though it has also been described as an uneasy muddle of assorted influences. The film I'm more curious about is the short called *Indian Story*, made in 1961 and dealing with the massacre of the Redskins. It isn't only the prison corrals, lonely homesteads, laconic dialogue, horses and cavalry cloaks of Jancsó's films that suggest an affinity with the Western.

*My Way Home*, at any rate, is the only Jancsó film we have seen to suggest awareness of the possibility of a kindlier

world. It is, he has been quoted as saying, "A sort of autobiography . . . not at all like my own life, except a little." The Hungarian student, caught among the stragglers making their way home in 1945 in the desperate and mischievous confusion of Soviet occupation, is played by András Kozák, now established as the actor who serves as a kind of *alter ego* for Jancsó: the decent, perplexed, apprehensive human figure in the obdurate landscape. He is packed off by his unconcerned captors to keep watch, with a wounded young Russian, over a herd of cows. The cows keep straying into a minefield; an inspecting officer turns up with a dog for the Russian boy to play with and yearn after; across the barricade of language, the cowherds strike up an optimistic, temporary friendship.

They play the games of children, running about and chasing and shooting at frogs; they make childish discoveries about their surroundings, stumbling upon a desolate château like a setting for the deadlier hide-and-seek that will be played out in the same sort of building in *The Red and the White*. The repercussions of the war are forgotten, and then flatly and lethally reassert themselves. But the indirect, reminiscent mood of the film, the mixture of shock and amusement in the discoveries it makes about captivity, the sense of a world not so much purposelessly cruel as indifferent, in which it's still possible to chisel out a little temporary niche of contentment: these all stand for another side of Jancsó. In the light of his later films, it is useful to know that it's there.

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The Winter, 1968 issue of *New Hungarian Quarterly* contains a fascinating article by Gyula Maar on Jancsó at work. One has to break through some rustiness and stiffness in the English translation, to a clear, tightly focused close-up. To his cameraman Tamás Somló on *The Red and the White*: "The scene has completely come to a standstill . . . don't you notice it . . . let's go on. You are composing on film . . . don't



compose on film . . . let's go on." To an actor: "Here at this point say something. You decide on a good Russian text . . . You ought to give your name too. Pick some sort of name quickly . . ."

To this Hungarian writer, *My Way Home* is the crossroads in Jancsó's career. In it he was "balancing with one foot on individual psychology and the other on history; *The Round-Up* is already virtually in its entirety about history." *My Way Home* is human, accessible, involved up to a point in character analysis, even though the last thing the people in it would do is talk about themselves. The three films that come after—*The Round-Up*, *The Red and the White* and *Silence and Cry*—make up a kind of trilogy. Self-enclosed works, aloof, dispassionate and enigmatic, they are films sealed off in their own hermetic time-capsules, in which executioners and victims, soldiers and peasants, the betrayers and the betrayed, circle endlessly in a freezing ritual. And at the same time they are works of real historical precision: 1860, 1918, 1919, ominous dates in a country's ominous history. Jancsó's newest film, *The Confrontation*, has been described by Dilys Powell as 'jubilant' and 'gay'. One might say that one will believe these extraordinary adjectives when one sees it, but I don't think so. After the narrowing down of the last three films, there could only be—if Jancsó is the really major artist one takes him for—a new opening out.

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Take the remarkable *Silence and Cry*. It opens, as all Jancsó films do, with a factual, explanatory title: the action of the film provides no context, and if the opening title were accidentally shorn off, the audience (at any rate the non-Hungarian audience) would be left without its bearings among those dateless peasant shawls and plumed military hats. In 1919, we are reminded, the brief Red revolution of Bela Kun was brutally suppressed by Horthy's White terror. Peasants who were known to have served in workers' battalions were subjected to a kind of house arrest, under constant police surveillance.

In one farm, in a remote village out on the great plain, a fugitive called István (András Kozák) is being sheltered. The farmer is himself a marked man, his punishments including being made to spend part of each day standing out in the yard in his best suit, clean shirt and boots; the humiliation is completely meaningless, but not some bizarre Jancsó invention. His wife, Terez, and her sister (I suppose she is a sister) have established some kind of *modus vivendi* in prostitution. And the police chief, Kemerí, in fact counts on them all to keep István quiet.

The link between Kemerí and István is never (of course) explained: they may have been friends, in some past less distant in time than in attitude; Kemerí may be working off old scores in sustaining this atrocious cat-and-mouse relationship, or he may feel a genuine compunction about sending István the way of the rest, 'over the sandhill'. István tries unsuccessfully to run away. Then he discovers that the two women are systematically poisoning the wretched farmer and the old mother. (This, incidentally, seems to be an oblique reference to an extraordinary case in which most of the women in a remote peasant village were found to be busily poisoning their husbands.) István goes out to report the crime, inevitably handing himself over: Kemerí orders him 'over the sandhill', then hands him a pistol with a single bullet. In a moment of enormous speed, suddenness and desolation István turns the gun on the policeman. The camera stays on the boy; there's a quiet thud of a falling body; the shot freezes on István, holding the gun as though it were some quite alien object which had forced its way into his hand. White-out on a larger desolation, as though the snow-sand of the opening shot had obliterated the image.

Jancsó has restored some of the puzzle element of *The Round-Up*: the fascination of trying to piece together motives and connections, everything behind the action. Affinities with Antonioni, discernible in the earlier films, here declare themselves in an extraordinary sequence. The husband is standing motionless in the yard, undergoing his preposterous daily drill, while in the foreground István and the two women—

first singly, then together—gyrate in a kind of ballet of secret relationships, permutations on fears and desires. Faces, throughout the film, remain shuttered and locked, but the elusiveness, as though the camera were always reaching out almost to catch something, suggests the tremors beneath the ice-floe. Terez, in particular, is astonishingly played by Mari Töröcsik: walking about with hands jammed into jacket pockets, or standing with arms severely folded, she is implacable but somehow horror-stricken, as though the Furies were after her. No one can criticise Jancsó in *Silence and Cry* for disregarding character; but it is character disclosed only in what people do—never in dialogue, never in memory, never in hopes or regrets.

*Silence and Cry* completes the stylistic process of the two earlier films: a total absorption of content into form. One can isolate a plot, a performance, a line of dramatic action, but this is an exercise completed afterwards, out of fragments. The film stands or falls by the hypnotic severity of its action, as though (as Robert Robinson wrote of *The Round-Up*) the camera were 'dreaming what it sees': dreaming the white horse in the farmyard, the police patrol at the back door, the stiffened corpses beside the frozen dyke, even the inscrutable dialogue ("Few returned home"—"None returned home") at the supper-table.

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Jancsó's style seems to me essentially purposive; but before trying to come to terms with the purpose, the justification for the cold rituals and the doling out and acceptance of humiliation, there is the manner of the films. Visually, everything begins with landscape: the horizontal compositions imposed, as it were, by the great grasslands stretching away into an endless distance. Jancsó is one of the few film-makers (Ichikawa is perhaps another) who seem to compose fundamentally for a wide screen, so that one can't conceive of their shots compressed back into a more upright and less flattened screen shape.

But landscape fulfils another function: this country, as Jancsó films it, seems at once the most open and the most terrifying in the world. There is no hiding place; nowhere to run to; no dark corners to shelter in, or to suspect as obvious sources of danger. With so much space, it seems impossible that anyone can ever be taken by surprise; and yet people constantly are—by the enemy cavalry troop, or the police patrol arriving out of nowhere. Jancsó brings into regular employment the principle used by Hitchcock for a few minutes in *North by Northwest*, when the crop-dusting, bullet-spraying plane descends from a clear sky: the special quality of danger in the daylight. And this landscape allows an extreme isolation of characters and situations. Soldiers or policemen impose their own context on the stolid peasants ("We live here. We're always here," says the farmer to whom István tries to escape). But perhaps this sense of extraordinary, man-made rules could only be accepted without strain in a landscape which itself swallows up people.

Stylistically, *Silence and Cry* carries the long take even further than did *The Red and the White*. Here, a cut is used only to indicate a change of place or time. Within a scene the camera is usually in horizontal movement, watching people in and out of frame, pausing, tracking, measuring space; and there is a kind of tranquillity in the realisation that a cut is simply not going to come until *that* setting at that moment has been absorbed and finished with. In one scene we see the girl in profile against the light, grave and graceful; then another clear profile against shadow, as she measures what looks like medicine into a glass for the old woman. She drinks it; sags down. Husband and wife haul her out into the yard, supported between them, march her clumsily around, dump her down like a sack of old rags and go back to supper. No one says a word. We have been attracted by a calm shot of a nurse-like girl; repelled by a dour duty callously done; and in fact we are witnessing the slow accomplishing of murder. Later, it will be the husband who gets the medicine and who is dragged and pummelled and supported, unresisting, apathetic, knowing and accepting what is being done to him.

The article in *New Hungarian Quarterly* describes Jancsó in





Above: "The Red and the White". White army soldiers, in parade ground order, face the last suicidal advance of the outnumbered Reds. Left: Andras Kozak in "My Way Home".



action: "It all starts with Jancsó not knowing. He doesn't know the angle for the take . . . Why doesn't he look at the script? He doesn't look at it, he hasn't the slightest intention of doing so; it's not from that direction that he expects the solution. His imagination is got going by the field, he stops, he thinks, he walks on—then the result makes it evident that at such times space is set into motion in front of him. It comes alive, it inspires the building up of the movement. That's what happens then, as seen by an outsider. The choreography of the scene comes into being suddenly, with extraordinary speed . . ." The setting of space into motion: the way a director works, the way it emerges on the screen.

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Jancsó's world doesn't open out into symbols or visual metaphors: it closes itself in upon a dreamy reality. Even a sequence like the nurses' dance in the forest in *The Red and the White*, that fantastic birchwood ballroom, resists 'romantic' interpretation—as does the paraphernalia of flashing swords, onion-domed churches, riderless horses, the Byronic gestures of doomed men, which another director might turn to high adventure. Jancsó freezes the romantic reference; though the fact that he first supplies it suggests it has a sizeable place in his enigmatic vocabulary.

Actors, notes Gyula Maar, are instructed on the set with a certain impatient civility, as though it is less trouble to satisfy them that they understand (or think they understand) the parts they are playing than to leave them consciously groping. Part of Jancsó's stripping process is a breaking down of the



MIKLÓS JANCÓS.

significance of gesture, so that it becomes a repetitive defence mechanism. The officer in *The Red and the White* who wanted to embellish his outfit with a monocle is severely ticked off: "The importance of the officers is such in this scene that it can in no circumstances be further increased by externals." Another reductive stage involves what seems to be an almost fanatical cutting away of dialogue. On *The Red and the White*, one actor apparently suggested that he should say to a group of soldiers: "Look me in the eye. Don't you even dare to look me in the eyes?" "No good," said Jancsó. "No philosophy!" The command can be given, but 'don't you dare' implies something more, and it is this something more which Jancsó constantly tries to eradicate.

The two boys in *My Way Home* don't talk much together because they can't, and in none of the other films is there any relationship based on conversation, or the possibility of a free exchange. What is left? A world in which talk is reduced to the level of the orders a man might give a dog: 'sit', 'stand', 'fetch', 'carry', 'kill'. A world of circumscribed and delusive gesture, and sinister and unexplained incident. In *Silence and Cry* the farmer and another man are taken by the civilian police (more threatening and mysterious in their comings and goings than the gendarmes) to look at two corpses stretched out by an icy ditch. In turn, they are made to touch and finger the oddments—spectacles, wallet and so on—taken from the dead men's pockets. Objectively, it is plain that the purpose is to get their fingerprints on these things. Subjectively, it

becomes a moment of freezing lunacy and irrelevance. And from all this, Jancsó suggests, there is no escape except through a gesture which amounts to a sort of heroic suicide. The trick which catches out the rebels at the end of *The Round-Up* is fiendish, but one feels that earlier on they might have resisted it. They have been brought almost to the edge of self-destruction. The Red soldiers in *The Red and the White* march straight at the White guns, held in that austere and appraising long shot, rather than go on ducking and running and playing the game of civil war. István and the police chief in *Silence and Cry* commit a kind of mutual suicide, the only escape from the tortured silence.

The saving graces of this arid world include, as always, visual beauty: the play of light, compositions of black figures against white walls, the strong verticals of Jancsó's almost abstract patterns. Aesthetically, the paring down of content is inevitably satisfying: it has the lure of the cloister, the white habit, discipline and rigour, the Bressonian impression of spiritual geometry.

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There remains the question of purpose, of whether the three films after *My Way Home* are more than aesthetic demonstrations of a world in chains, landscapes with a particular quality of threat and apprehension. One of the mysteries of the last forty years, I suppose, has been a kind of acceptance, almost a complicity in frightfulness. How were the Jews made to walk unresisting to the gas chambers? How could very ordinary people become accomplices in monstrosities? How, in the post-war totalitarianism of Eastern Europe, could people be persuaded to accept the revelation that the admired statesman of yesterday was today's traitor, the roulette wheel politics in which a man came back from a state dinner to find the secret police in the house? What does this face of obedience look like?

The why of this is not Jancsó's concern, but his pictures are full of fearful insights into the how. In particular, in their sealed-off landscapes, they suggest the element of complicity, a kind of despairing, understanding relationship between prisoners and gaolers, the men on top today and the men who might be on top tomorrow. Stunned and rabby peasant faces yield no comfort; whoever wins, they certainly lose. And the audience is wholly excluded, cut off by those deliberately alienating techniques, compelled to attempt the evaluations which the films refuse to make. Nobody on the screen questions an order or the authority given by a uniform; the victims put up with the unbearable, or the merely ludicrous, as though this were being demanded of them not by the men on the screen but by some invisible, immutable rulebook, a highway code to obedience which everyone has learned.

Only someone who has lived through those years, in this quarter of Europe, could probably achieve this aloof cutting out of metaphysics, speculation, the urges to justify and explain. Bergman's *The Shame*, for instance, is perhaps a fair example (slightly complicated by the old Swedish neutrality neurosis) of the Western artist's approach to slightly similar subject matter. It is essentially subjective and hypothetical. How would the artist, civilised, rational man, on the side of light, react to a situation which cut him off from everything but the shell-bursts in the garden, the beating up in the back-yard, and the midnight interrogation? Of course he comes on dragging his burden of Freudian guilt. And isn't there a certain masochistic commotion about Bergman's inevitable assumption of the worst, so that he imagines both the blow and the cowering under it?

For Jancsó, nothing is subjective, hypothetical or, for that matter, guilty. There are no fantasies, no past or future, no ghosts, no characters stretched out on imaginary analysts' couches. The women who have turned to poison in *Silence and Cry* are monstrous stoics who have found their own appalling way to survival. If it costs them a night's sleep, that is their affair; and if the camera dreams, it is not their nightmares that it illustrates. Jancsó's films are dream documents of civil war, in which all the guilts are shared. And "there is no finer aesthetic pleasure," he once said in an interview, "than the discovery of justice."





JOHN BOORMAN WITH MARCELLO MASTROIANNI AND BILLIE WHITELAW.

## IN THE PICTURE

### White Man's Burdens

JOHN BOORMAN was making his fourth feature film just around the corner from Latimer Road tube station in Notting Hill. He'd painted the streets black, they said, and it was true—uncannily so, as if a nuclear bomb had scorched five hundred square yards or so of London and left it still freakishly standing. Boorman was striding cheerfully around in the middle of his dusky kingdom, with hoses washing the streets to simulate rainfall. Whenever they stopped, it rained, and whenever he started shooting the sun came out. "You should have been here on Monday," he said, waving towards enormous ruins at the end of a cul-de-sac. "We blew up an entire mansion."

This, then, was to be a stark study of slum life and racial tensions? Not exactly, it seemed. For a start, *Leo the Last* is a comedy. "Racism is perhaps where it begins, but the reason the whole picture, shot in colour, will be in blacks, whites

and greys is that I want to establish visually as well as thematically the farcical aspect of any sort of 'colour' problem. We're all coloured some shade or other, so why so much fuss? I suspect that integration is a matter of habit—that in a few years nobody will notice any more." The film is in fact set in the near future, its story constructed around the return of Prince Leo, last of a European royal line, to his family's crumbling but palatial residence in a London teeming with people of all races and colours. Representing the old order of white supremacy, Leo tries with clumsy idealism to involve himself in the problems of the district, but is torn between the rich, decadent friends who take over his house, and the simpler but more vital street life outside.

The action is based on a story by George Tabori (who wrote Losey's *Secret Ceremony*), but Boorman and his screenplay writer, Bill Stair, were following what they said had been a habit, since *Catch Us If You Can*, of complete flexibility, adding and subtracting scenes, lines and characters as they went along. "I'll probably be six months on the editing," Boorman said, "and everything will get changed another couple of dozen times. You can't stick to the written word when a scene is transformed unpredictably just by the look of a particular actor or the way the setting fits around the camera." And he mentioned Vladek Sheybal (once the cadaverous ocharina-player in Wajda's *Kanal*) who, apparently, can do extraordinary things with his ears. Other pleasing discoveries had been Glenna Forster Jones and Calvin Lockhart, two Negro players with important roles. "And there's Doris," Boorman said.

There, indeed, was Doris, a lady some four feet square, leading several of the unit in a harmonious improvisation of the Banana Boat song. She strolled down the ebony, glistening pavement under a vast black umbrella, like an inspired

caricature of the leather-clad phantom in *Herostratus*, letting rip with a voice that shook most of Notting Hill. Boorman had found her at Speakers' Corner and employed her on the spot to act as a kind of chorus throughout the film, singing several numbers to punctuate the story.

Toughened by her years as a street-singer, Doris had taken to the strains of film-making like a professional; but not unnaturally it had been an eventful partnership. This had been an eventful film to make. There was the matter of a fire which demolished several bits and pieces and narrowly avoided consuming the director himself as he rescued a pot of plastic lilies. And there was the case of No. 27, whose occupants, not yet removed to a new home, absolutely refused to have their house painted along with the rest of the street for fear it would be assumed empty by vandals. Boorman got round that one by putting up an imitation house-front. For one scene, he had stripped the clothes from his cast and plunged them naked into a local swimming-bath. "They took to it quite well," he commented, showing me some pictures of a dripping Mastroianni (who plays Leo) looking tolerant with water up to his chin.

Some further stills revealed a dramatically explicit orgy sequence. This was going to be something of a contrast to previous Boorman films? "As far as I'm able to define it at this stage, I'd say that I see it as dealing with emotional atrophy. People are learning too fast, information is pouring in on them from every side, every day. Anything that happens is reported all round the world in seconds. And the result is a kind of over-exposure, a burning out. You've seen everything by the time you're ready to make a living, so why bother to try? You can't do a thing without feeling you've seen it in a movie. That's why there are already schools of therapy in America which concentrate on the reawakening of the senses—the idea



is to massage the individual personality back to life. Leo is revived in the film by seeing real people at close quarters and realising that the idiotic excesses of his own class, who strip off at a party just for kicks, are meaningless."

So one could say, looking back, that this was after all what each of his films had been about? "Yes, I think that's possible. *Hell in the Pacific* is a good example, although it had a different ending tacked on (in mine, the two men simply went their separate ways), and I also prefer the original title, *The Enemy*. That implies more of the sense of everybody having a personal, instinctive fear of everybody else until they get to know them."

It was raining heavily, and Boorman rushed back to his street shot. The sun emerged and he gave up, went into one of the houses and started filming a chandelier. "All together now," shouted Doris, for no apparent reason, from the depths of an armchair—and dark faces appeared at windows to join her in a calypso. Back in Oxford Street, the buildings all looked black and the people all looked multi-coloured. Nobody, however, was singing.

PHILIP STRICK

## Rio Festival

RIO'S FESTIVAL was a motley buffet—some scraps from last year's European festivals, a tossed salad of current commercial fare, and a platter of mouldy cheeses from all over the place which Cannes and Venice were not nibbling at. The Young Turks of Cinema Novo, a group responsible for whatever international attention the Brazilian film industry has received in recent years, refused any part in the proceedings. They claimed that the Festival had been designed mainly to promote foreign (read American) inroads on the South American market. Most young film-makers from abroad of note who had been invited, did not show up out of sympathy for the Novos, and new films left to compete were a sad lot: a charmless Russian fairy tale (*Snow Maiden*) which looked like a gooey raspberry ice left to melt overnight in a meadow, a creaky Portuguese peasant drama (*The Iron Cross*), something from Japan called *Rio-Tokyo Love*, sex farces from Germany and Spain.

Amidou received the Silver Seagull best acting award—in Lelouch's *La Vie, l'Amour, la Mort*, a whining and Mondo Cane-ish plea for the abandonment of capital punishment. Prize for best direction went to Jacques Deray for *La Piscine*, a novelettish tale about Alain Delon and some playmates behaving badly near a Riviera swimming pool. *Joanna* (Special Jury Prize!) was programmed the same evening as Italy's *A Place for Lovers*, making for a 'Smile Through Your Incurable Disease Night'. De Sica and Zavattini's newest fall from grace has Faye Dunaway taking a last few turns around stately homes with Marcello Mastroianni—he doesn't know that her red

blood corpuscles are counted.

The Cinema Novo folk make some poor films every year, and a few really good ones, all of them very cheaply. The non-Novos (those favoured by the government) make bad films in all price ranges. This year, the non-Novos got together for two months and produced the most expensive film ever made in Brazil. The third month they rested, and called it *La Compadecida* (*Our Lady of Compassion*). Its only asset is a striking young Negro actor (Zozimo Bulbul) who plays a supposed village idiot who turns out to be Jesus Christ in disguise. It is a silly mess indeed, but since much of the budget was spent transporting 200 people 3,000 miles from Rio to a small town in the north of Brazil in order to repaint all of the once beautiful blue houses there sickly shades of yellow and pink, the Festival added a prize for art direction to the honours list, and awarded it to *La Compadecida*. The Grand Prix of nothing should be nothing; but although Argentina's *Martin Fierro*, based on a nineteenth-century epic poem of Gaucho life, is far from Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's best film, it is a vigorous and virile work; by 1969 Rio standards it deserved a seagull and a half.

All through this fortnight endurance test, the Brazilian press was a source of interest and relaxation, supplying much invaluable and little-known information: one learned that juror José von Sternberg was leaving for Japan after the Festival, where he would shoot a new film, *Anatahan*. It promises to be one of his finest. One learned that Sir John Gilbert of the British Film Institute had arrived with a print of *Dad of Nights* for the Cavalcanti homage; that the previous Rio Festival's best actress prize had gone to Sylvie Vartan for *The Shameless Old Lady*; that Sylvie Fennec, star of Ingmar Bergman's *Adelaide*, was enjoying Brazil lots.

Rio's most important morning paper ran a story headed 'Very Important Jury' with photos labelled King Vidor and Karel Reisz, neither of whom was in Brazil or on the jury—and Karel Reisz was a very attractive young woman. When Darryl F. Zanuck arrived in town, the press office produced paroxysmic handouts on the life and great times of the Fox potentate who had taken the trouble of coming all the way from Hollywood. Zanuck promptly made it clear that he hadn't even known there was a movie festival 'down here'—his doctor had told him to go bake his

CLAUDIA CARDINALE AND PETER MCENERY IN SKOLIMOWSKI'S "ADVENTURES OF GERARD".





aching foot in the sun. If the nail had a head, actor Anselmo Duarte hit it, when he declared to reporters: "Rio is a better film festival than Berlin, because at Berlin they don't have a beach."

ELLIOTT STEIN

## Oberhausen 1969

IN RICHARD BARTLETT'S fifteen-minute film *Bitter Grapes* a fat glutton approaches the first stage in a resurrected life when an aggressive nun beats his belly to the vomiting point. Poisons pour noisily out of him and after rolling around in his own wastes long enough thoroughly to disturb the Oberhausen Short Film Festival audience, which saw it as one of 150 competition films, the purged fat man wobbles off for a romp with nature. In flabby nakedness he babysteps purified and renewed on the clean sands of a deserted beach, experiencing the fearless passion of the sun and the friendliness of the ocean with almost virginal innocence. The film, like the fifteenth Oberhausen Kurzfilmtage itself, was alive, provoking—and effectively made its statement.

For the Festival emitted a lot of garbage. Mingled in with the bad, however, was a surprisingly large number of extraordinary films: films of guts and vigour which generated overwhelming feelings of pressure, of limited time, of outrage. Everybody's pressures of the past year could be felt, and the cumulative effect of so many 'Now' films in the intense seven-day period was often disturbing. People got bothered; the films reached them at deep emotional levels despite their occasional artistic and technical lapses.

Czechoslovakia's *Sprizneni Volbou*, for example, overcame film-making weaknesses to capture one of the five Grand Prizes for director Karel Vachek. Documenting the political events of spring 1968, which led up to the election of Svoboda as president, this is an intimate and apparently honest look at political change in which the visual medium actively participates as an instigator. Existing (and persisting) as an accurate record of historical fact that political pressures cannot change, the film's importance was underscored when Czechoslovakia suddenly felt compelled to withdraw its entry which contained sequences on Jan Palach's funeral.

Western films made political statements less fearfully. Of several fine student protest documentaries, Italy's *Della Conoscenza* won a Grand Prize with its analysis of student action during the crisis of the Italian university system. Combining actuality with deep emotional involvement, director Alessandra Bocchetti's achievement is to reach beyond reportage to unleash the great emotional powers of political cinema on the imaginative life of the people.

Marrying cinema to television in *Black TV*, America's Aldo Tambellini also raps at the foundation of public faith and confidence upon which political leadership is built. Documenting Vietnam, assassination, police strife and racial clashes in a rapid machine-gun succession of images



EXPLODING TRAIN IN GEORGE ROY HILL'S "BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID".

photographed directly off the cathode tube, he forces his audience to experience the unsettling atmosphere of violence and chaos that flickering TV images often transmit.

While films from the West tended to examine the mental shackles on modern man's freedom, those from the East dealt more with physical restraints. In Czechoslovakia's second Grand Prize winner, Jan Svenkmajer's *Byt*, a young man is caged into an absurd reality of his own making. A modern variation on the Sisyphus story, the objects of everyday life rise up to govern and terrorise their continually protesting victim.

Victims of modern technology are scrutinised in West Germany's Grand Prize winner *Heinrich Viel*. Abandoning all the traditions, techniques and pretensions of cinema, directors Gisela Büttenbender and Jutta Schmidt lock their camera into a thirty-five-minute medium-long shot to watch two factory workers at their repetitive assembly line life. The combination of real time with cinematic time carries the audience from annoyance to disturbance to insecurity on gradually deepening levels of consciousness: forces thought about the daily routine, concentration on a common experience.

By taking a determined step towards the socially engaged, the protest, and the experimental, Oberhausen pulled itself up out of the depths that the poor films and programming of 1967 and 1968 had plummeted it into. This renaissance also saw Oberhausen reassert itself as the most important short film forum in Europe. With the short pioneering paths for the feature, the prime significance of Oberhausen 1969 seems to be its implicit statement that the future is heading for a no-holds-barred cinema in which the most successful films will transcend national boundaries to share with each other common experiences in time.

NORMA GREEN

## Work in Progress

NOEL BLACK: Follows *Pretty Poison* with *Run Shadow Run*, from an original screenplay by George Wells, with Robert Forster as a former cinema student who uses perverse and cold-blooded techniques to make films. For 20th Century-Fox.

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA: To write, produce and direct four films for Warner Brothers-Seven Arts, starting with *The Conversation*, about privacy.

RAOUL COUTARD: Turning to direction, with *Mi-automne*, the story of a young Vietnamese orphan left alone in war-torn Saigon. Cast headed by Danièle Delorme. Madeleine Films.

ALAIN JESSUA: Makes his film debut in America with *La Planète Bleue*, about the wife of an astronaut whose outlook changes entirely when she learns of her husband's accidental death.

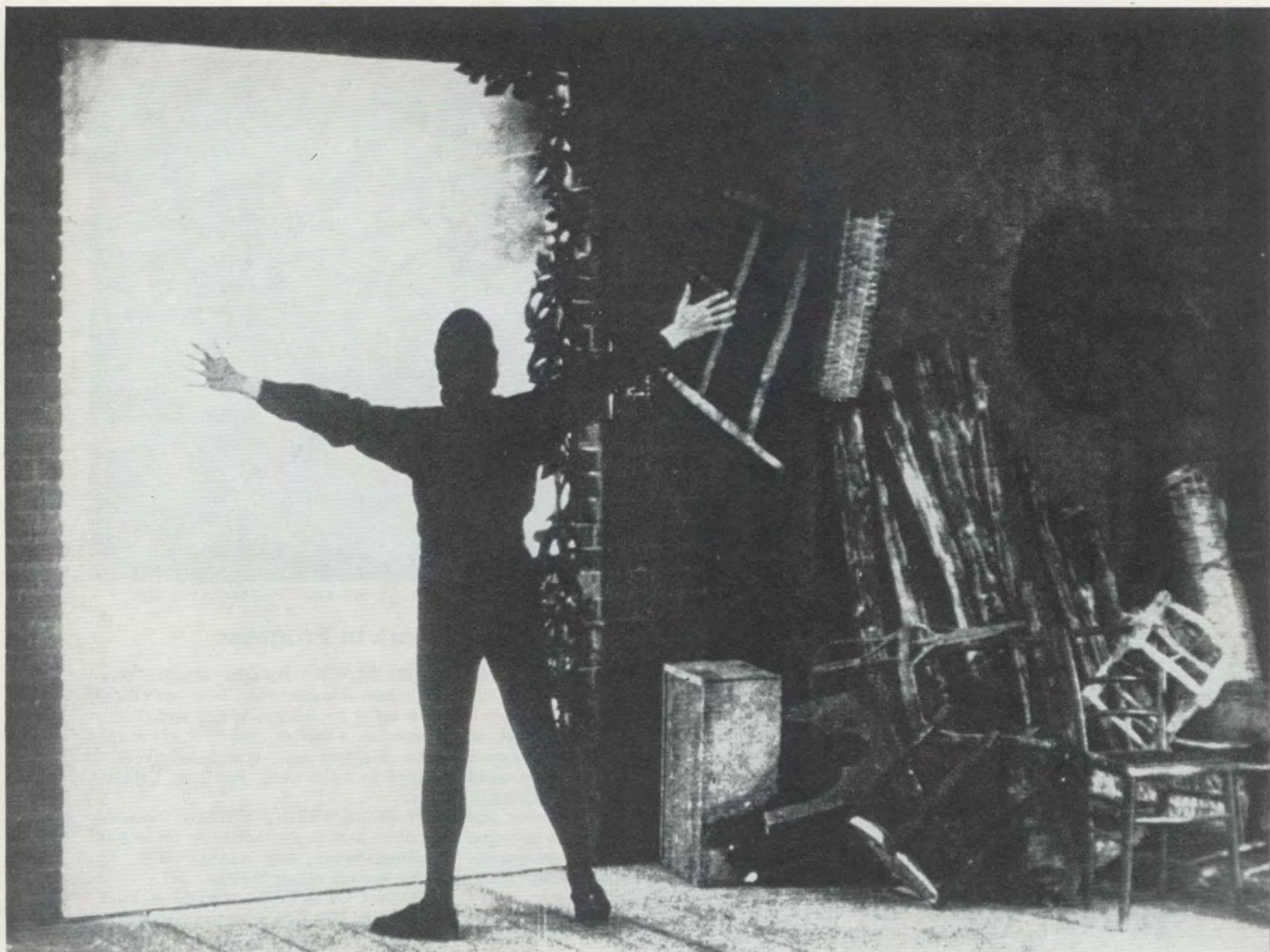
JOSEPH LOSEY: *Figures in a Landscape*, starring Robert Shaw and Malcolm McDowell, with screenplay by Stanley Mann from the novel by Barry England. Cinecrest for CBS. Also working on Nicholas Mosley's book *Impossible Object*, due for production later in the year.

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI: to direct Maria Callas' first film role in *Medea*, not so much Euripides' heroine, says Pasolini, as 'the Medea of legend, who is closer to my idea of her.'

ROMAN POLANSKI: Writing, producing and directing *The Day of the Dolphin*, based on Robert Merle's novel *A Reasoning Beast* about a scientist who teaches a pair of dolphins to speak English, with mixed results. For United Artists.

OTTO PREMINGER: *Tell Me That You Love Me, Junie Moon*, starring Liza Minnelli, Roger Moore and Ken Howard, depicting the courageous search for love by three physically handicapped people. For Paramount.





FEUILLADE'S "FANTOMAS".

## Beginnings

**RICHARD ROUD:** *When did you first decide that you wanted to make films?*

**ALAIN RESNAIS:** I can't give you an exact date, because . . . Well, do you know the story of when I first visited Darius Milhaud, the composer? He began to tell me about the day Fernand Léger came up to his flat accompanied by a lion. Léger had rented the lion from a travelling circus that had set up on the Boulevard Clichy. And before Milhaud could finish his story, I said, "Oh yes, and then you said to Léger . . ." "Oh, God," said Milhaud, "I always forget that I told that story in my autobiography."

It's the same with me. I always forget what I said in previous interviews. But whether I've told it already or not, this is how it began. I wanted (like everybody else) to be an actor. The results of my efforts to become one were not particularly encouraging, so I gave up. But by then I had grown so attached to the milieu that when IDHEC (L'Institut des Hautes

Etudes Cinématographiques) opened, I signed on to learn how to be an editor. At that time, the very idea of a school to teach people how to make films was something startling and exciting. Anyhow, I said to myself, if I'm going to spend my whole life at a job, wouldn't it be better to be in the film world rather than among books? Until then, I had always wanted to be a bookseller. I was interested in editing; and more important, I would be able to earn my living without losing contact with the world of actors. That was the main thing: not to leave this milieu I found so fascinating. I would still be able to go backstage, as it were.

*Had you never thought before that time of going into the cinema?*

I never dreamed of being a film director when I was young, but when I saw the first Ginger Rogers/Fred Astaire dance numbers (or maybe it was even before, with Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler), I suddenly had a strong, even violent, desire to make films. Those dance numbers had a kind of sensual

Richard Roud

# MEMORIES OF RESNAIS



movement which really took hold of me, and I remember thinking I would like to make films which had the same effect on people, that I wondered if I could find the equivalent of that exhilaration.

*The strange thing is that one does find that sense of exhilaration in all your films, even in MURIEL where the camera scarcely moves.*

My great hope in making *Muriel* was to save time by not having any camera movements, and when they asked me how many feet of track rails I was going to need, I said, none at all. I wanted to see if I could make a film without using a single tracking shot. But in spite of this, the shooting went more slowly than ever. Mind you, we did pan and tilt, but the camera didn't actually move except in the final scene. *Harry Dickson*, on the other hand, would have been done in 70 mm. with the actors always framed full length—head to toe—throughout the film. A little like Feuillade, perhaps. But I would have been able to take advantage of the high definition and absolute clarity as well as the absence of depth of field that only 70 mm. can give you. That way, I would have been able to show the characters full length without sacrificing any details or facial expressions.

In both cases, of course, the formal structures were suggested by the subject matter. *Muriel* had to be a mosaic. I mean, Cayrol and I didn't just decide to make a film which would be shot this way or that. It all began with an idea: one day on the stairs, Cayrol said, "I've got an idea you might like, a film about provincial life. Wouldn't you like the idea of a movie about a kind of double city—pre-war and post-war, with people who can't find their way any more because the new streets don't follow the lines of the old ones?" Of course, I was interested.

*Don't you think you were in some way influenced simply by the desire to make a film which would be, independently of the subject matter, different from MARIENBAD?*

No, no. That is, well, perhaps, yes. I've always been tempted by the idea that since the last film was such and such, the next one should therefore be different; therefore since *Mariénbad* was made up of only one shot, so to speak, why shouldn't I try a film which would have an enormous number of shots? Since I was always inside the characters' minds in *Mariénbad*, therefore couldn't they in the next film always be seen from the outside? *Mariénbad* was unchronological; *Muriel*, therefore, would be completely chronological.

*On the other hand all your films have taken place in the provinces, with the exception of LA GUERRE EST FINIE.*

Oh, how I suffered precisely because that was made in Paris. First of all, there are practical problems when you shoot in Paris. Parking, traffic, things like that. And I don't like going home after a day's shooting. The crew had marvellous memories of the shooting of *Muriel*: we each left our respective hotels at five minutes to nine, and by nine there we were, all on the spot, ready to go. In Paris, it's always taxis; people are usually late, and you spend a fortune keeping parking spaces open . . . I have no desire to make another film in Paris. Nobody likes filming in Paris: it's so much easier for an actor to believe in his role if he doesn't go home to his family at night.

Mind you, we did get away a bit, since some scenes were shot in Stockholm [it was a Franco-Swedish co-production]. We had to construct Marianne's apartment, because we couldn't find one available in Paris. It may sound strange, but it's true. In any case, apartments are very expensive there: 100,000 old francs per day. Geneviève Bujold's flat was also shot in Sweden: it was a reconstruction of Jean Vilar's apartment in Paris. The only important interior shot in Paris was the student meeting in the flat giving on to the Montparnasse cemetery; and that cost plenty.

Actually, there are people who have fitted out private houses in the suburbs as mini-studios, but they are never very good because sound recording is too difficult; there's too much reverberation. Someone like Godard wouldn't mind, because he has been able to turn such a disadvantage into a positive style. He discovered that 'bad' sound has a kind of charm, and he uses it. But you should never make the mistake of thinking that his kind of sound is in any way more realistic;

the human ear selects, and the microphone doesn't. In conversation, we automatically block out traffic noises; a microphone will pick them up as loud as our voices. Godard may think his sound recording techniques are realistic, but actually the result is pure expressionism.

I don't think the French cinema as a whole pays nearly enough attention to sound. If I'm ever lucky enough to make another film, I am going to try to have two or three sound boom operators instead of the usual one. If sound crews were only bigger, I am sure the results would be better. Post-synching is all right if you want to try for a special effect, but I think it's better to get the sound during shooting. Of course, the Italians—Fellini in particular—do everything post-synch. That's his idea of making movies: it's not mine.

## Feuillade

*Let's go back to your early filmgoing experiences. When did you see your first Feuillade film?*

My first? It must have been, yes, it was very late—in 1944, when Langlois showed *Fantômas*. Then there was that great evening with Musidora there in person at the Cinémathèque, when they showed *Les Vampires*; and then *Barrabas*. I adore *Barrabas*.

*The guillotine scene at the beginning reminded me, because of the elliptical way in which it is edited, of some of your own films.*

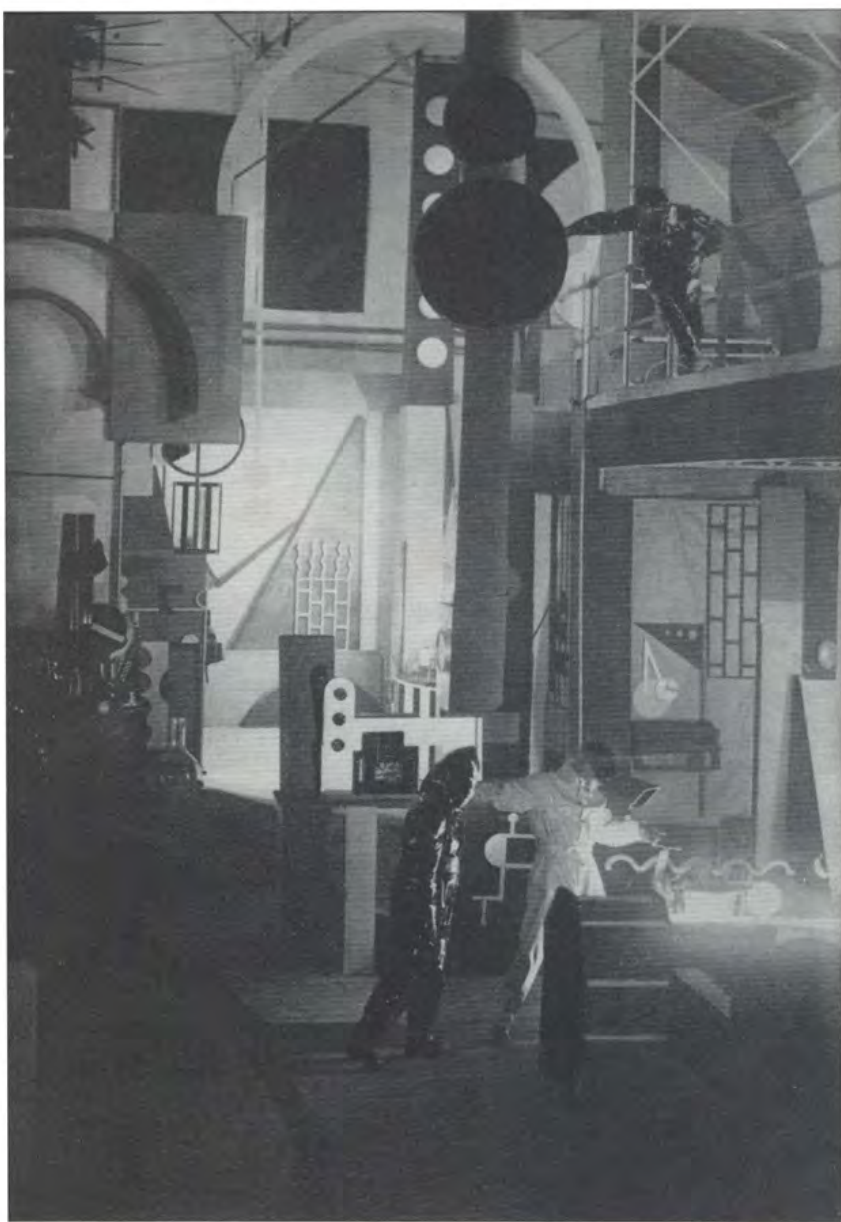
Really? You know, the trouble with those films is that they are like dreams. If you don't write them down when you first wake up, it's hard to recall them later on: I just don't remember the guillotine sequence. In any case, Feuillade's cinema is very close to dreams—and therefore it's perhaps the most realistic kind of all. For me, *Les Vampires*, *Tih Minh* and *Barrabas* are the best. *Judex*, on the other hand, was too much a film made to order. Even the book by Bernède was written purposely to try to correct any bad impressions left by *Les Vampires*. And this approach is as bad as trying to make a film with a very specific message. When Feuillade made *Fantômas* (and when Marcel Allain wrote the book) they let their imaginations run wild. But they pondered over *Judex*: they injected moral notes, comforting elements. Of course there are moralising bits in *Les Vampires*, but they seem quite natural. It was Feuillade's own morality that came out, but at the same time he was obviously fascinated by the diabolical nature of the characters. *Judex* was all too carefully worked out; there was none of that marvellously natural, easy-going quality of *Les Vampires*.

*Legend has it, however, that your connections with Feuillade went back much earlier than 1944.*

That's true. I must have told the story a hundred times, but it's true nonetheless. I was lucky enough as a child to have one of the first Kodak 8 millimetre cameras—they had just been launched on the French market. I began to make an adaptation of one of the *Fantômas* stories, but as I only had little boys and girls to play the parts, I brought the camera up close to them, thinking that would make them seem bigger, like adults. But my critical faculties were already sufficiently developed for me to realise, once I saw the finished film, that somehow the dramatic atmosphere and tension I was trying for were just not there. It's too bad I noticed, because otherwise I would have gone on, and we would have had hours and hours of *Fantômas* played by school children, and what a document that would have been.

One funny thing was that the only way I could think of linking shots was with dissolves (maybe this was the influence of Marcel L'Herbier); I also wanted to have iris shots, wipes, composite images, and no amateur camera could do any of these things. Except, of course, for the famous Cine-Kodak Special which I used to look at in the shop windows. It could do everything, and of course, it was a 16 mm. camera! Really professional! Disney even used it for his documentaries later on. For a long time it was the finest camera in the world, and it still remains a fascinating object. It had a rectangular shape like the 1925 Voisin automobiles: the *Art Déco* influence, I suppose.





SET DESIGN IN L'HERBIER'S "L'INHUMAINE". THE ARCHITECT MALLET STEVENS, FERNAND LEGER AND CAVALCANTI ALL WORKED ON THE FILM.

## L'Herbier and the Avant-Garde

When Sadoul interviewed you for *LE POINT*, he quoted you as saying: "What I like in Marcel L'Herbier is his sure taste in the popular novel, his attempts to remain in contact with the literary men and artistic movements of his time, and his definition of the director as 'the first spectator of a film . . .'"

That's all true. Also, I think that the attacks on L'Herbier's films have been widely off the mark. What was it they reproached him for? For using sets, for not thinking writers were a separate race from scriptwriters, for therefore using Blaise Cendrars as his scenarist, for using Fernand Léger as his set designer. All of these seem like good ideas to me. And it is also true that I have a great feeling of nostalgia for the expressionist film. Although I don't know why I say nostalgia; such films are still being made, and as far as I'm concerned we can never go beyond expressionism. Bill Klein's *Mr. Freedom*, for example, is a completely expressionistic film. Maybe that's why it provoked such violent reactions: some people just can't accept having reality transposed to another level.

Which of L'Herbier's films did you see when you were young?

*Eldorado*, for one. The reason I spoke in that interview in *Le Point* about the popular novel (the *feuilleton*) is because when I was younger, I didn't understand its appeal or its value. The other films of L'Herbier I saw very much later, around 1946 at the Cinémathèque. I used to think that his *L'Inhumaine* must have been (for I hadn't seen it—in fact, I still haven't seen it) quite marvellous just because it was not adapted from a *feuilleton*. But *Eldorado*, my first contact with L'Herbier, certainly was *feuilleton*-esque. Later I learned

to like the *feuilleton*; starting of course with *Fantômas*, which is the masterpiece of the genre. And then I understood much better why the young directors of the Twenties used *feuilletons* as a basis for their films. I used to think it was purely a stylistic exercise, for I hadn't yet understood to what degree the subconscious, the surrealist association of ideas, were present in a pure state in the *feuilleton*—more than in other forms of art. Now, you see, I understand Abel Gance much better.

I now feel both attracted to and repelled by L'Herbier: attracted by his principles, his ideas, his theoretical writing. And I'm quite prepared to believe that they have had some influence on me. Jean Epstein, too: for I am convinced that one can be influenced by a man in other ways than through his films. The three lines about him in the Bardèche and Brasillach history, a still in *La Revue du Cinéma*, an article by Brunius, a text by Breton: I'm convinced that all these had their effect. And the one book about the cinema which really fascinated me before I began to make films myself was by Epstein. I did in fact see some of Jean Epstein's films when I was very young. He made some films in Brittany, and as these were the first talking Breton films, they were widely distributed in my province: *Mor Vran*, and *L'Or des Mers*, for example. And I found them very, very disconcerting. I was only nine years old at the time, and they both frightened me and left a really deep impression.

Then there were the texts of Delluc: I used to dream about what *Fièvre* must be like, but I never saw it, and as a matter of fact, I still haven't. I did see *La Femme de Nulle Part*, however.

Germaine Dulac, on the other hand, I found very disappointing. Her attempt to apply musical time to pictorial time was a real disaster (mind you, I'm glad she tried it: somebody had to); her mistake was in confusing aural and visual perception and retention. I suppose she had to do her symphonies on flowers just to teach us all that it was a path not worth pursuing. And *La Coquille et le Clergyman* was really proof that . . . well, that *Un Chien Andalou* was authentic. You would have thought the two films could be lumped together, but they can't, because one is genuine and the other is sheer coquetry. Another example of the partly phoney film is Man Ray's *Etoile de Mer*.

## Cocteau, Bresson, Guitry

When did you see your first German expressionist film?

It was *Caligari*, in 1936. My goodness, how I admired that film. Of course, like Jacques Demy, I was a real provincial. There were a lot of films that just couldn't be seen in Brittany, so when I got to Paris and found them all there, wow! I remember reading a review of *Le Sang d'un Poète* in a magazine called *Le Coup de Patte*: I was really intrigued by the violence of the review—it said that this was a quite disgraceful film. As I read it in Vannes, I thought to myself, does this mean there is a kind of cinema that is really so different from the kind I had been used to? So the minute I got to Paris, I started to track down *Le Sang d'un Poète*; when I finally did, I was extremely impressed. Actually, I still admire it very much.

How did you feel about Cocteau's work as a whole?

Oh yes, yes. I was very moved by *Orphée*. I remember though that when I first saw *La Belle et la Bête* I didn't really get it. Without knowing it, all through the Occupation I was waiting for a film like *Citizen Kane*, a film that would overthrow all the established conventions. So when I heard Cocteau was making *La Belle et la Bête*, I thought, this must be it. Then I saw it, and all I found was a very pretty Vermeer-like film, but not a revolutionary one. Only in 1955 did I understand that it wasn't trying to be revolutionary; that it wasn't trying to follow the line of *Le Sang d'un Poète* or *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*. So the second time round, I just sat back, and fell under its spell.

During the early Forties, what films impressed you? Did you see *LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE* when it first came out?

On the first day, and I was rather disconcerted. As Bazin said when he saw it first, it seemed to him like a total impasse for the cinema; only on a second viewing did he realise how



easy it was for a critic to make a mistake. The first time I saw it, I loved it, except for the ending. It seemed to me that the vengeance of Hélène didn't make any sense in our time. The whole idea of a misalliance just didn't work, I thought, and only proved that you couldn't transpose Diderot into the twentieth century. I was very struck, however, with Cocteau's dialogue, its sheer musicality. Two days later, I saw it again.

Of course, I had already been fascinated by *Les Anges du Péché*, Bresson's first film. For me it was a filmgoer's dream come true: someone had finally asked Giraudoux to write a film script. And in heaven's name, why not? I was—and still am—obsessed with the idea that it should be possible to create a soundtrack which will be just as beautiful, just as magical as, let's say, the language of Shakespeare. Just because there is an image, it doesn't mean that it has to replace all that words can create. I'm sure that if there were a 20-year-old Giraudoux now—and perhaps there is—one could resolve the problem.

Furthermore, I am convinced that the quality of the sound can convey both the meaning and the emotional charge of a text. You see, an actor's performance can be modified for the spectator solely by the way the microphone is placed. I've verified this for myself, and it is both true and terrifying; it shows to just what an extent the actor can be deprived of his natural resources in film-making. And he can do nothing about it: if the boom operator is clumsy, many of the subtler effects simply won't come through. And no one will understand why: they'll say, Oh, he wasn't up to scratch in that scene—and it will just be because of the placing of the sound boom. Progress is being made in sound recording, but a lot remains to be done. There is no standardisation of loudspeaker equipment in theatres, for example. One day, we will get there, and then perhaps we'll be able to have on the screen the same kind of language we get in the theatre. Some people say this is wrong: that the language of Shakespeare served to make up for the lack of sets. But I don't think that's a good enough argument.

*It may not be good enough, but there is always the danger of redundancy, of pleonasm.*

Of course; but it's only a question of balance. I like the story of Abel Gance's presentation of the sound version of *J'Accuse* at the Studio 28 cinema. There was a triple screen



SACHA GUITRY IN "BONNE CHANCE".

sequence, and in order to give the projectionists enough time to lace up, he had a five-minute sequence with no picture on the screen, only sound: it was supposed to be taking place in the dark underground tunnels at Verdun. So instead of an interval, the audience sat in the dark just listening: and it really worked, it was wonderful.

*Do you like those later films of Bresson which did not have scripts by an important writer?*

Let's say that working with Cocteau didn't in any way diminish Bresson. Furthermore, in *The Diary of a Country Priest* there is surely a great deal of Bernanos. *Pickpocket*? People say there's a lot of Dostoevsky there, but I'm not so



"LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE".

sure about that. In any case, film is a matter of collective responsibility; not only the director and the writer, but the set designer and the actors.

*Was LE ROMAN D'UN TRICHEUR the only Guitry film you liked?*

Oh, no. If only one could find a print of *Bonne Chance*—there doesn't seem to be one left. That, for me, was an excellent example of Guitry's genius. When I was a boy, I always used to wonder: Why is it that I'm never bored by Guitry? The camera doesn't move very much, the shots don't change very often, and yet I'm not bored. It's only people sitting in chairs talking to each other, but it's never dull. You never long for a change of shot, you never get restless, whereas in other films if there wasn't movement, I used to get very impatient. Is it simply because what they're saying is so interesting?

*Have you seen Chris Marker's LE MYSTERE KOUMIKO?*

A lovely film: now there's a Guitry-like movie. It infuriates Marker when I tell him he's right in the Guitry tradition, and yet it's true. All he can see in Guitry is his bourgeois mentality, not the charm of the actors; so he always denies any idea of a connection.

*I suppose he prefers to think of himself as having been influenced by Giraudoux?*

Yes, but we should never forget that the first enthusiastic review of the Giraudoux-Bresson *Anges du Péché* was in fact written by Guitry in *Comoedia*. It was on the front page, boxed, and it said, "Although I don't really like the cinema, I must admit that here is a great masterpiece. I take my hat off to it . . ." etc.

## La Règle du Jeu

*Did you see LA REGLE DU JEU when it came out?*

Not until 1944. But it remains, I think, the single most overwhelming experience I have ever had in the cinema. When I first came out of the theatre, I remember, I just had to sit down on the edge of the pavement; I sat there for a good five minutes, and then I walked the streets of Paris for a couple of hours. For me, everything had been turned upside down. All my ideas about the cinema had been challenged. While I was actually watching the film, my impressions were so strong physically that I thought that if this or that sequence had gone on for one shot more, I would have either burst into tears, or screamed, or something. Since then, of course, I've seen it at least fifteen times—like most film-makers of my generation. I even recorded the whole soundtrack on my tape-recorder, and it's amazing how well it stands up on its own.

*Did it already have its reputation in 1944, or did you see it by chance?*

It had a reputation all right, but that of a *film maudit*. I didn't know quite what I was letting myself in for. I knew it had been hissed at the Cinéma Madeleine when it first



opened, and I believe it only ran for about a week. And the critics attacked it so violently! Nobody has ever understood why it was so fiercely attacked. Renoir himself said one of the strangest parts of the whole affair was the fact that when he had cut a scene which had been hissed at the previous performance (he spent most of that week in the projection box), the audience at the following show just hissed something else a few minutes later. The most surprising thing of all in 1939 was that Renoir's other films like *La Grande Illusion* had had perfectly normal commercial careers; so why the fuss over this one?

## Welles

*When did you first see CITIZEN KANE?*

When it opened at the Marbeuf in 1948, the very first performance. I had already seen *The Magnificent Ambersons*, though, which had come out on the film society circuit. I was rather bewildered by the violence of the audience's reaction to *Kane*. First of all, there were a number of professional film-makers in the cinema, and they were absolutely livid—



STAIRCASE ENCOUNTERS IN "LA GUERRE EST FINIE" (LEFT) AND ANTONIONI'S "CRONACA DI UN AMORE".

you could feel it in the air. Once again, it was a question of a mental block: here was a film which shook all their preconceptions. In the first place, they had the idea that America meant Westerns, perhaps comedies; otherwise it was a country of barbarians, a country in no way up to *thinking*. "What's all this?" they said. "We did it twenty years ago. Here are these Americans imagining they are intellectuals. Don't they know they're not, that they mustn't try to be: they're nothing but grown-up children, and that's their charm—their spontaneity, their liveliness. They should stick to that and not bore us to death with such complicated, confused stories."

That was one kind of reaction. The other was more subtle: "Really, that kind of photography went out twenty years ago; and my dear, the editing, it's so old hat." Of course in France at that time we were plumb in the middle of that school of photography which depended on lots of small spotlights. Hundreds of tiny ones, with filters, too. The most famous lighting cameraman of the period was Roger Hubert, and he did in fact get some remarkable results with this method... but that didn't mean other solutions weren't possible as well. Like the short focal-length lenses which the audience objected to so strongly.

*When they said the French had done it all twenty years ago, whom did they mean?*

That's just it! I don't know, unless perhaps it was L'Herbier. Anyhow, the conversation always ended up with, "Welles, who is this Welles?—he must be some kind of an intellectual film-maker..."

But one mustn't forget that it was Jean-Paul Sartre who had started the whole campaign against Welles. When he first came back from New York he wrote a famous article about how he had been frightened out of his wits by Manhattan because, he said, it was the only city where you could see the

horizon on all sides; and it had given him a real sense of nausea. In this same article, he said that he had seen *Citizen Kane*, the film by this new genius who had come to the forefront during the war. And that although *Kane* might have been interesting for the Americans, it was completely *démodé* for us because the whole film was based on a misconception of what cinema was all about. The film is in the past tense, whereas we all knew the cinema had to be in the present tense. "I am the man who is kissing, I am the girl who is being kissed, I am the Indian who is being pursued, I am the man pursuing the Indian." Any film in the past tense is the antithesis of cinema, said Sartre. Therefore, *Citizen Kane* is not cinema. It's literary and intellectual, but it's not cinema.

This article had appeared in *L'Ecran Français* and was very widely read, so even the reception of *Ambersons* had been coloured by the piece.

## Antonioni, Visconti, Godard

I was very impressed by the early Antonioni films. Not *Cronaca di un Amore*; I find it nice to look at, brilliant even, but a bit too much like sparkling water, Perrier water. Further—



more it had too much of the thriller about it; too much like some of those American things, the Hemingway short stories. But *La Signora senza Camelie*, with its marvellous sequence shots, that really impressed me. As for Visconti, I thought very highly of *Ossessione*, which I saw at the Cinémathèque in 1944. It seemed to me to have all the freedom of Renoir and yet its own formal qualities.

*In an interview with Bernard Pingaud in L'ARC you said that of all Godard's films you particularly like DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE because of its total narrative dislocation. I think you said that if one examined the film closely one might find new laws of progression. A spectacle has to be carried along by its own movement...*

That's a problem which interests me because I am never sure how to resolve it. I realise dramatic construction has to evolve, but you can't dispense with it altogether. It's just a question of finding a new form for it. Many people argue that all the rules of dramatic construction are now outdated. But I can't imagine a film in which the contact with the audience is not achieved by some form of dramatic construction.

People say that Godard puts his films together any old which-way, but I don't believe it: I'm sure there is a kind of construction there. The trouble is that many younger directors use Godard as an excuse to string together a whole lot of images and then claim it's the new style. I'm very sceptical; I don't believe you can keep an audience in the theatre without resorting to some form of order. Of course, this form has constantly to be re-invented—each time, in fact. But I wonder whether a really careful analysis of certain new techniques might not reveal that they are in essence still the same old rules which have applied for six thousand years. Mind you, I'd rather not think too much about this, because such a close examination tends to dry you up.



## Robbe-Grillet and Duras

*How do you feel about the comparisons sometimes made between MARIENBAD and L'IMMORTELLE?*

Of course there are great similarities, but if anyone had the right to make a film along the same lines as *Marienbad*, that man was Robbe-Grillet. So many annoying things were written comparing the two films, that it almost makes me think there must be something disturbing for the critics in the fact that when the shooting of a film really goes well, it means there is no single author. Everybody is responsible for everything.

*And yet . . .*

And yet, yes, I know what you mean. But there is often a moment during the making of a film when a scene hasn't been written, or part of the script hasn't yet been delivered; the scene still has to be shot on the day, so somehow between us all, we manage. And I maintain that such a scene, even though it wasn't written by the scriptwriter, nevertheless belongs to him. During the shooting of a film there is something stronger than any of us, something which takes possession of the whole crew, and that is the film itself. That is why it is difficult afterwards to know how much any one individual was responsible. And that's also why I got very angry when people said, "Oh, Robbe-Grillet copied *Marienbad*." It was a stupid thing to say because for one thing *L'Immortelle* had been written before *Marienbad*.

There were two producers, Raymond Froment and Pierre Courau, who thought that I ought to make a film with Robbe-Grillet. I said No, because, going by what I had read about him in *l'Express* and elsewhere, he was apparently a very boring writer. But I had never read anything of his myself. They said, "Well, at least the two of you should meet." So I agreed, since I always like meeting people, and I took an immense liking to him. We talked about movies, the kinds of

things—shots, sequences, set-ups—we wanted to do, for we both seemed interested in the same things.

At the end of the morning, he said he would try to think of a project for us. There was a film he wanted to make for himself—*L'Immortelle*—for which he had already done the treatment, but he wouldn't mind postponing it. "It might be more sensible," he said, "for you to make a film first so that I can get an idea of how it's done." He said he would 'phone me in a week with a few ideas. Meanwhile, I read all his books: I read one a day (there were only four then) and I remember being especially impressed by *La Jalousie*, and *Dans le Labyrinthe*, too. Each was better than the last. So by the time we met the following Sunday, I already felt much closer to him.

*Had he been to see your films during that week?*

No, he had seen them already; he goes to the movies a lot. Anyhow, on Sunday he gave me four possible subjects plus *L'Immortelle*. The choice was mine. It was, he said, all the same to him. We took about three days before deciding to do the *Marienbad* subject.

*I see; but nevertheless I was struck by the difference between what were roughly the same shots in both films. Just as Delphine Seyrig in MARIENBAD is always turning up wearing different clothes, so there is a sequence in L'IMMORTELLE in which we see Françoise Brion head on, and then the camera does a 360 degree pan without a cut, coming back to her wearing a different dress. It always seemed to me that such a shot was a failure because all one could think of was, "How did she manage to change her clothes so fast?" And this is just an example of the difference between the realisation (not the conception) of MARIENBAD and L'IMMORTELLE.*

Yes . . . We did the same kind of thing in *Marienbad*: in the course of a single camera movement the same character

*Continued on page 162*

"LA REGLE DU JEU"





# RECENT RICHARDSON-



## CASHING THE BLANK CHEQUE

George  
Lellis

**T**ONY RICHARDSON's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is schizoid, not only artistically, but also as a phenomenon. As phenomenon, it has been his first critical success since *Tom Jones*, which was four films ago and about as many years. As art, it contains, back to back, the very best and very worst of this aesthetically ambiguous director, for the best becomes, in turn, that which makes the worst worth talking about.

In truth, the purely phenomenal aspects of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* are not so much inherent in the film as in the inconsistency of critics. I find it quite difficult to accept the judgment that *The Loved One*, *Mademoiselle*, and *The Sailor from Gibraltar* are that much worse, or, for that matter, that much different from the two successes that flank them. It is unfortunate to have to say that Richardson's cinematic hits are both

overrated and over-evaluated and that his flops are, in kind, underrated and under-evaluated, for this would seem to bulldoze his work out to a consistent level of mediocrity. What is to his credit, however, is that it really is a consistent body of work; one which, for all its toying with sloppiness, derivativeness, over-ambition and just plain poor judgment, has a constant level of interest. There is, in any film, a point at which mistakes, if pursued logically, can have not only integrity but fascination, and failures, if properly investigated, become more provocative than successes.

If one complimentary generalisation is to be made, it is that Richardson's greatest talent lies in his brilliant ability to handle dialogue. This goes beyond the usual compliment of 'being good with actors', nor is it just a good ear for idiom and verbal timing. It lurks, rather, in the underbrush of his entire approach to a film. A Richardson

movie always looks as if it has been worked out from a very carefully prepared script; and this feeling occurs, oddly, even when the scripts are poor. There is the sense, too, that he sticks very close to this verbal preconception, as if he wants to keep extraneous material from overthrowing a striven-for totality. His locations, while always correct, are never flamboyantly exploited, and his actors, good or bad as they may be, invariably have a confidence which looks as if improvement through improvisation were the farthest thing from their minds.

Perhaps its roots are in his strong background in the theatre, but Richardson's *mise en scène* has a constant look of being fitted to the dialogue almost over-carefully, as if he considers the whole purpose of framing a scene to be that of backing up the actor, as if he were blocking on stage to emphasise all the high moments. The problem is not a new one; it has been a critical bone of contention ever since talkies came into being, and perhaps no one is more aware of it than the director himself. Often, however, the overall view of the film looks lost amid the individual well-punctuated lines, a watering down of the strong sense of continuity which some less careful director might achieve inadvertently through broad, non-subtle strokes.

For example, the quick gag construction first employed in *Tom Jones* and later carried into *The Loved One*, while making each joke momentarily funnier, eventually tires the audience, for it never allows a minor character to be on screen long enough to establish dramatic empathy, thus losing the plot interest needed to produce depth. *The Loved One* is not a trivial comedy, and most of the characters eventually return to fill out their roles; what is unfortunate is that by the time they do, we do not care. Our satisfaction, say, at the second appearance of Mrs. Joyboy, crushed by a refrigerator, does not quite match our restlessness at this obese creature's slowing down of a story whose conclusion is by now overdue. *The Loved One* falters because it is torn between the classic desire to tie up all the story ends and the modern need for comic acceleration.

Needless to say, the concept of making a movie by framing (often in quite the literal sense of the word) the dialogue which is at its core, makes the film only as good as its script, much more so than is usually the case. In Richardson's early films this becomes a fascinating process to watch, for the scripts adapted from plays (*Look Back in Anger*, *The Entertainer*, *A Taste of Honey*) have strong characteristics of their own, and do not easily shake off their one-set conceptions and frequent rhetorical exuberance. What these plays do provide, however, is a fine sense of timing and sequence, one in which there is



rarely any danger of a scene losing punch because it has been underdeveloped in the dialogue, as long as the original dialogue is retained. The exact opposite can occur when working from a scenario written for the screen, and the workings become quite different when a weakness or thinness of verbal qualities goes uncompensated for in terms of the adequate visual substitutes needed to keep the film going.

Where a picture like *The Loved One* can keep ploughing, almost gracefully, through a series of outrageous one-liners (probably contributed by Terry Southern), balanced with a certain stylised elegance (probably accreditable to Christopher Isherwood), the same Christopher Isherwood has no co-author of Southern's talent to act as *alter ego* in *The Sailor from Gibraltar*. The elegance is there, but it is less richness than tinselled campiness; the direction, to boot, is too over-straight and realistic for the film to work as the tenuous but poetic sexual fantasy to which the Marguerite Duras novel might have been adapted for the screen. Once again, a faulty sense of construction gets in the way. While the individual episodes in *The Sailor from Gibraltar* are often understatedly interesting enough, they neither build together, work together, nor have any dramatic context to the central mystery of a half-hearted half-search for an only possibly existent lost lover.

To the extent that intentional obliqueness is used to capture a wispy, uncertain reality, this schematic nature is not bothersome. But these near-vignettes move by too quickly, taking themselves for granted, and, being unsatisfactorily bridged, fail to increase in intensity. Jeanne Moreau (very good, smiling more than ever, embodying and acting out many of the sexual fantasies she only evokes elsewhere) and Ian Bannen (very bad, providing his *vis-à-vis* with no masculine counterpoint by a kind of sleepy-eyed nonchalance which is neither appealingly decadent nor villainously self-absorbed) float around Greece, Alexandria, Ethiopia and exotic environs, bumping (literally—the film's cameos are wooden nickels) into Orson Welles and Hugh Griffith as they go. Even when the acting is fairly passable, the dramatic zenith is invariably reached too soon, and the scenes move on before they can sink in. And the more effective the fragments are individually, the more obvious becomes their lack of relation to each other. The picture is composed of pale, pointillist dots of good movie-making—a striking image here, a nicely spoken line there, an occasional look by Moreau—but these are only good as dots. Seen at a distance, such little stabs congeal into nothing, like the signs and dead-end leads left behind by Anna's sailor himself.

To its credit, however, *The Sailor from Gibraltar* manages to approach quite accurately Marguerite Duras' quiet but evocative writing style, one in

which comparatively insignificant objects and incidents are given meaning, acquiring never-quite-clear but always monumental implications. Perhaps this is a manner which works well for books but poorly for movies, and either a gaudier, weightier or more blatantly dreamlike style might have given a restrained picture's existential glancing and fidgeting a bit of pseudo-meaningful sock. Nonetheless, the result is an appealing combination of rigorously (in treating fantasy material with dead realism, producing a displaced, recognisable-but-not-real quality) and seeming carelessness, rather paradoxically understated by a director who at one time looked as if he could whip flashy interest and dash into even the most musing and pallid of stories. As it stands, for all its moments of restlessness and latency, *The Sailor from Gibraltar* winds up working too much along with its subject matter, rather than in contrast to it, so that the outcome is something of an anaemic cross between kitchen sink naturalism and *Last Year at Marienbad*, as if Delphine Seyrig were once again lifting her hand to her shoulder, but this time dressed in rags.

Moreau hardly fares better at the hands of Jean Genet (albeit Genet's original scenario was filtered through the hands of David Rudkin, Michel Cournot, Oscar Lewenstein and Richardson himself before it reached its final form) in the earlier *Mademoiselle*. Ettore Manni, hardly a more colourful actor than Ian Bannen, plays an Italian immigrant who, we gather, speaks very little French. So here we are given a leading man who is not only dull, but who cannot even say anything to his leading lady. For a director whose most redeeming virtue is his capturing of human speech, this becomes suicidal. It is no wonder, then, that with the cross-dubbing from an international co-production, coupled with Manni's Italian and Moreau's peculiar septameter English (much better suited to the cosmopolitan type she plays in *Sailor*), the whole film seems out of place in a French village which is almost as mythically Gallic as *Tom Jones* and *Charge of the Light Brigade* might be called mythically British.

We spend long stretches at the beginning watching Moreau do a lot of lone walking, as she opens floodgates, poisons animals, immolates tree blossoms with a cigarette, and commits arson, all of which would be worth seeing in themselves if we felt some sort of security in the film's accurate rendering of place and environment, or in its building into some form of dramatic involvement. Yet *Mademoiselle* seems strangely oblivious to its audience's presence, preferring to study with obdurate clinicism a character interesting only for her perversity. Richardson goes into the race with a handicap, by keeping his mademoiselle in both real

and dramatic solitude. It is no wonder the film suddenly comes alive in the parts where Moreau is teaching class, particularly in a key scene where she is chastising Manni's young son for wearing shorts to school. We momentarily hope that, once again, one of our best actresses will provoke the kind of confrontation sequence she handles so well. We are let down. The child instead takes his revenge by brutally murdering a hare, and Moreau, instead, has simply been given a quiet little speech, in her odd English, as if she were talking to herself.

Rather than create some dramatic fireworks, the episode functions only as a strangely verbal respite in a strangely non-verbal film. Even the climactic orgy in the woods is better when it begins, when Manni beckons her to touch the snake he has hidden (with great phalliccility) under his shirt, than when we are left to hear only the birds and crickets serenade their silent love-making. There is no fight in *Mademoiselle*, no argument,



WELLES AND MOREAU IN "THE SAILOR FROM GIBRALTAR".

no conflict. It is perverse and masturbatory in its inward direction of emotions on the part of its characters. For a director whose strong point is in getting people to communicate, it is, as has already been mentioned, deadly.

If *The Sailor from Gibraltar* can be called naturalistic and rigorous, then the *mise en scène* of *Mademoiselle* is mannered to the point of stiltedness, and, appropriately, inhibition. Richardson uses an immobile camera, forcing himself into a complete reliance on montage, framing and formal composition—photographic rather than theatrical effects—rejecting in the process the relaxed dolly which made *The Loved One* so comfortable, or the hand-held camera which brought so much attention to the fox hunt in *Tom Jones*. His decision so to limit the range of this picture is one of the most ambiguous this artistically mercurial



director has made, and its effect on the film cannot go over-considered.

A Panavision screen is used rather than the smaller academy ratio of his previous work, forcing every close-up to look strained, awkward and self-conscious, as if the images were pieced together and animated from the contact sheets of some brilliant but slightly myopic photographer who, in looking for brilliant single effects, somehow became oblivious to the totality around him. We never get the feel of the layout of the village or the surrounding land; houses become reduced to doors and rooms rather than pieces of architecture. It is a needlessly annoying circumstance for any film; it is all the worse here because it prevents us from experiencing the stifled bourgeois atmosphere which the sexually repressed school marm (and Genet) hates so much as to want to burn it to the ground. Instead, all of *Mademoiselle* opts for an artificial,



"MADEMOISELLE": MOREAU AT THE FLOOD-GATES.

over-composed, artsy-craftsy look, caught somewhere between trying to be true to life and trying to be an *objet d'art*.

Nonetheless, for all of *Mademoiselle's* overdressing (it's a wonder Moreau's spiked heels never get stuck in all that mud), the photography for all three of these films—Haskell Wexler's for *The Loved One*, David Watkin's for *Mademoiselle*, and Raoul Coutard's for *The Sailor from Gibraltar*—are among the most interesting examples of the use of black-and-white in 1960's filmmaking. Wexler's, not only for playing so well off the black mourning motif necessary in a comedy about embalming, but for its use in capturing thereby a stylised viewpoint of American vulgarity, one which might look just plain cheap were it done in more realistic hues. Watkin's for its odd twilight effects, which keep everything constantly dark, as if the whole picture were preparing for the thunderstorm which

comes at the end. Coutard's for its blanched, Mediterranean look, as over-exposed as Watkin's seems under-exposed, and looking slightly reminiscent of his black-and-white work for Godard in *Breathless* and *Les Carabiniers*, with the same detached, synthetic feel, as if the camera just happened to be there.

Perhaps in realising his errors of judgment in handling Genet, producing a movie which looks over-conceived but under-achieved, Richardson did just the opposite with Duras, giving the second film its casual, non-causal feel—one where mistakes will hopefully seem in keeping with the only half-serious tone of the picture, that of a melodrama being played for fun, rather than a tone which makes mistakes seem like gross miscalculations. Indeed, *Mademoiselle* might have been saved had it had, at all, a sense of humour to fall back on.

That, of late, Richardson's comedies (*Tom Jones*, *The Loved One*) have been more successful than his two subsequent movies with Moreau goes further than the expected audience preference for humour, either to morbidity (*Mademoiselle*) or pretentiousness (*The Sailor from Gibraltar*). It would not be going too far, even, to say that Richardson is indeed more skilful at handling belly laughs than he is at evoking such intangibles as world-weariness, latent eroticism, or mystery.

If *The Loved One*, contrary to critical opinion at the time, can be considered at all successful (and I think it can), it is because it is one of the few recent comedies to blend an adequate dosage of both verbal and visual humour, neither of which is forced into the discomfort of appearing awkwardly superimposed on its characters. Rather, it arises from them, in magic moments when script and acting personalities synthesise into one. The cast for *The Loved One* is not at all a bad rogues' gallery (Rod Steiger, John Gielgud, Robert Morse, Jonathan Winters), and its members, for all their tottering between satirical cliché and comic exoticism, are still far more recognisable as human beings than the super-broad stereotypes which inhabit critically respectable successes like *The Russians Are Coming*, not to mention lesser horrors.

It should come, then, as little surprise that *The Charge of the Light Brigade* achieves some of its greatest successes when it arouses a laugh, although it should be said immediately that the film could have well done without Jill Bennett's dispensable and annoying equivalent of the Broadway Jewish mother. On the whole, however, in his grotesque portrayal of nineteenth century military stupidity, Richardson attains, with the help of Charles Wood's very good Victorian dialogue, a view of history that is funny, dry, and detachedly observant. The importance

of this dialogue should not be underestimated, for it all rings with precise truth, despite its challenging insistence on archaic language to evoke period. These lines are, as might be expected, beautifully read by the actors, with both theatrical import and cinematic nuance. This successful combination, this electric matching of fine actors with lines sturdy enough to support them, makes the rest of the film look like sauce, with little else to redeem it. That uncanny ability to get laughs and simultaneously remain within the semi-historical characters of a hundred years ago, characters who speak what sounds like the language they should be talking, all in a milieu realistic enough to be believable yet stylised enough to be attractive in itself, is quite a task, and the resultant contemporaneity of the tale is certainly rewarding.

For a time the film succeeds, and blends two of the screen's greatest abilities: that of transposing reality with the highest accuracy, and that of toying with that reality, now-you-see-it-now-you-don't style, moulding it into a satire of at least some universality. It is perhaps the only manner that the subject could possibly be tackled in 1968, and, momentarily, Richardson plays touch and go with being the George Bernard Shaw of the modern art movie.

Most of the dialogue takes place early in the film, in England, before the cast (*sans* Vanessa Redgrave, who has become conveniently pregnant) reaches the Crimea, and it is in these early scenes that Richardson's most impressive talents come into play. He has uncanny abilities at positioning actors for the lines they are to say (he even uses a very unconventional device in cross-cutting the successive close-ups for dialogue scenes—that of pushing the speaking faces way to the corner of the wide screen, sometimes half out of frame, as if they were about to fall off—to strangely good dislocating effect); for pocketing them properly in a room for both conversation and confrontation, and for placing them so that they are not overpowered by all the sets, costumes, interiors and bric-à-brac. The romantic attachment between David Hemmings and Vanessa Redgrave is properly pitched, developed and sustained (if not concluded), so that for all the love affair's would-be triviality, it becomes a plot framework against which the rest of a major film might have bounced from a springboard start. It is one of the few times an historic event has been presented as a truly logical result of the atmosphere which produced the people who engaged in it; and what emerges is not an historical novel set of melodramatic situations but an elusive, obliquely presented, but very definite relationship between fact and fiction.

To be specific, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* starts out by demonstrating, cinematically, that were it not for the over-formalisation and over-



specialised development of Victorian society, such a folly would never have taken place. History at last is being treated on screen not as a matter of melodramatic destiny, but as another logical link in the course of human evolution. This may have little to do with the art of film *per se*, but if we must have films based on history, then they might as well be good history; and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is both good art and good history, for about forty minutes.

What makes the film fall to pieces, like the very army it shows? If one primary derogatory generalisation is to be made about Richardson, it is that he has a lousy sense of landscape. Put him amid unending Victorian furnishings and he seems as at home as if he were shooting in his own house. Put him outdoors, amid hills, terrain and geography, with people on horses, saying little and doing much, and the movie just doesn't know what to do. The Charge itself is a climactic dud; the events leading directly up to it are little better. It is, partially, a question of content. Sea-storms, cholera attacks, cavalry charges, and floggings (an ominous inclusion for the first part of the picture) are the standard conventions of the epic; and for all the elemental difference it makes in this film, and despite its anti-heroic, anti-patriotic, anti-chauvinistic aims and tone, Trevor Howard's Lord Cardigan might just as well be Lawrence of Arabia, *Hawaii's* Abner Hale, General Custer, Charlton Heston's Moses, or anyone fording the River Kwai. Even the clichés would be acceptable, in a genre sort of way, if they were well done. But Tony Richardson, who can back actors into the most beautiful of corners, just does not seem to know how to handle actors on horses, Turkish extras, or any landscape which does not have a definite wall or end. The least he could do would have been to establish where people are, how they are moving, and (to be creative) their motivations and reactions.

We see all manner of galloping, dying, and assorted military manoeuvres which simply have not been adequately explained to us. The few brief seconds in which David Hemmings gallantly tries to save the impending mess light up the screen with almost day-night contrast to the impersonal, mechanical, and, worst of all, non-visual goings-on about him. Richardson's actors don't let him down; he lets them down, by neither giving them enough to say and do, nor allowing us even to track the paths of their vapour trails as they move about the landscape set. A film composed of exteriors just cannot succeed unless visual relationships are established between people, their surrounding objects, and, in any sort of war story, the enemy. It is doubtful that anyone was expecting Richardson to emerge as another Eisenstein (although a bit of



JOHN GIELGUD IN "THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE".

study of the master would have done his recent movie some good): it is asking him not to do his material a disservice.

Yet, glancing back, we may see that this is neither an illogical nor an unprecedented type of disservice for Richardson's work. To parallel the military to the erotic, the Light Brigade's charge is about as exciting as the two-person orgy at the end of *Mademoiselle*, and both take up about the same proportion of the picture's running time. *Mademoiselle* just doesn't know what to do with Moreau and Manni when they're out there debauching in the cornfields, not because their actions are unexciting, but because the distancing and formalism employed provide neither point of view, nor dramatic tension, nor talking, nor fluid eye. The prejudiced organisation of the French townspeople to kill the Italian workman arouses no excitement, or even interest, partly because we have little reason to sympathise with him (Genet plays up to our own pyromaniacal tendencies, and we're rooting for Moreau, the castrating female rapist, if anyone), partly because their actions are too bizarre for any involving contrast. (Moreau's she-wolf call following coitus is an elegant moment, if you like that sort of thing, but hardly something with which you can identify.) As scenes of abandoned love-making and mob-pursuit are intercut together, the film grabs at a momentum it hasn't the strength to hold on to. We are never given strong enough visual or verbal tie-ins to these two simultaneous events; the film is under-spoken at precisely the moments when words of love or hatred would be most effective, and, on the graphic level, it remains equally dispassionate.

It is not surprising, then, that of all of Richardson's recent work, *The Loved One* is by far the most uniform and satisfying because he uses so little of the

real Los Angeles in it, creating, rather, the microcosm of Whispering Glades to encircle much of the action, allowing the film to function as a whole. Whispering Glades is at least a place where comic plays can be successfully played without diffusing themselves throughout the whole countryside, a place where disbelief can be suspended in a valid theatrical sense, in order to allow caricatures to evoke some audience response. The clowns get their laughs partially because they are in a location where laughs can echo with focus and point. Richardson's success in tight spots (literally) is in strange but logical parallel to the degree that he can keep his actors still enough to be forward and distinct. In contrast, by scattering the Crimea out as if it were an indefinite stretch of uninteresting land (perhaps it is, but . . .), or a French village into an unrelated collection of houses, forests and floodgates, with a village square thrown in somewhere, or the Mediterranean into a mere puddle in which a few self-indulgent people splash around, the sense of dramatic battlefield, that of mapping out reflected emotions on a cinematic drawing-board, is brilliant in pieces, but the Gestalt is lost.

Nonetheless, I hate to be hard on Richardson. I don't think it can be said that he has made a film not worth his time and effort and that of the spectator. At the rate he is working, he may still produce a body of cinematic literature by all means sufficiently interesting to warrant the occasional, if not frequent, lapses which he suffers. But even if he is never totally vindicated as a director, or his flops never remembered as pieces of work in themselves, there is a tremendous fascination in watching someone who, by means of a triumphant success in *Tom Jones*, got himself *carte blanche*. And what is more—he has used it.

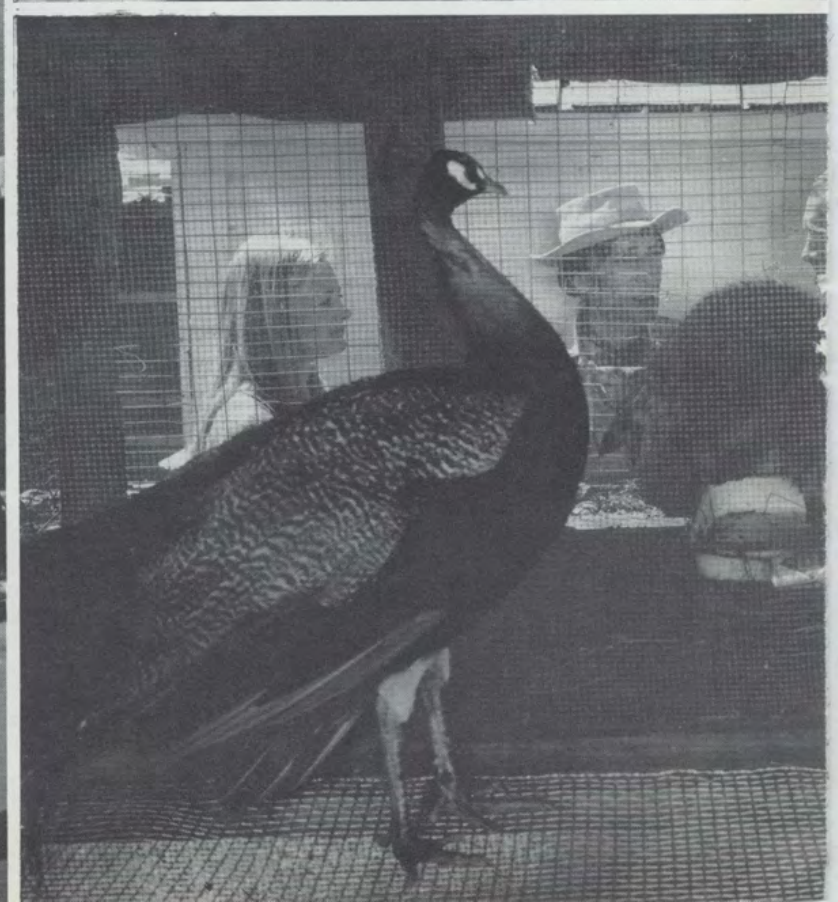
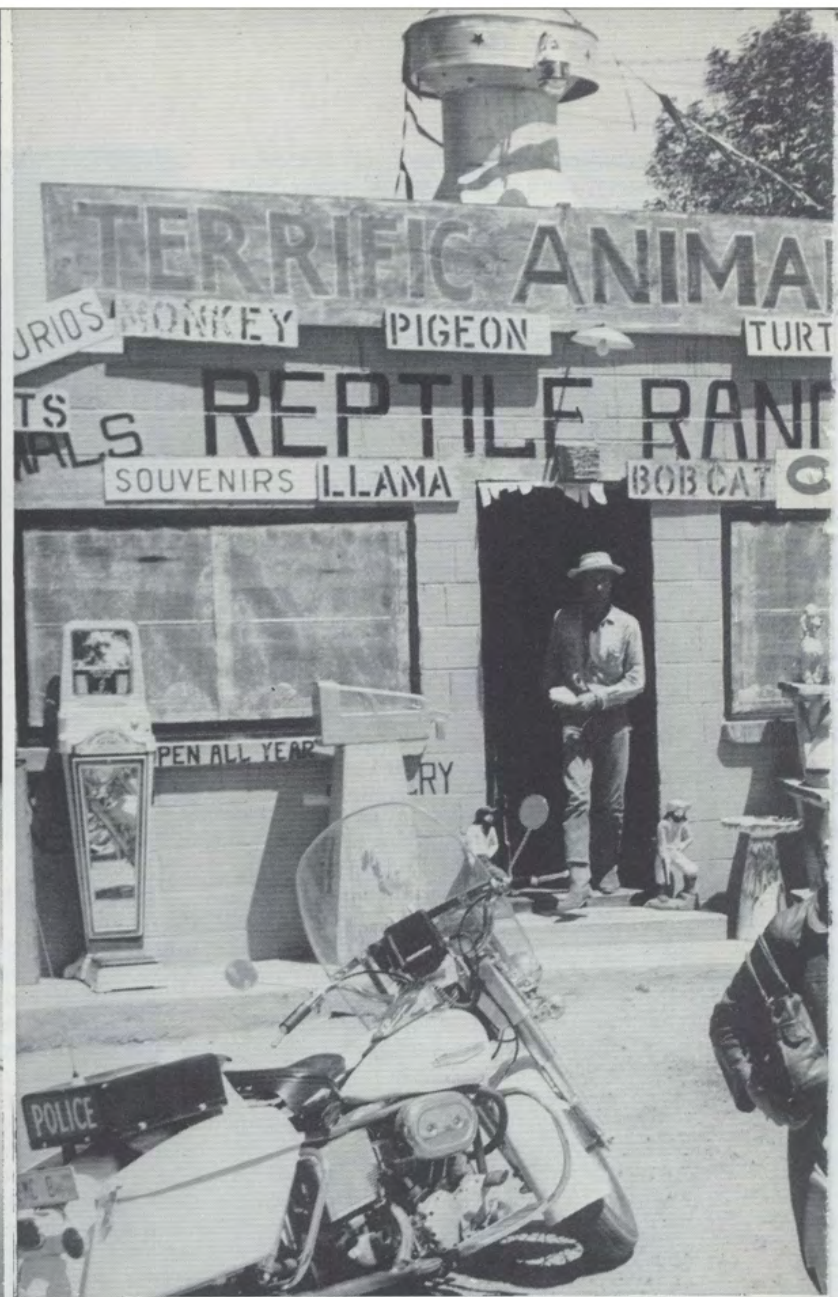
Granted there may be an indulgent involvement with projects not only not commercially viable but artistically foolish, but at least he has been daring, unafraid of being bad, and willing to go all the way out on limbs. Granted there are times when his super-confidence and brashness would be more welcome were they bridled with some more classic film technique. (At times he tries too hard to be a French director; perhaps he would get away with more of what he does if he were.) But somehow and somewhere there is always something redeeming in a Richardson film—in its cast, photography, intent or serendipity. The tracing of his career becomes oddly intriguing. It is like seeing a sudden millionaire who, upon inheriting a fortune, goes out and squanders it, but (and it may well be the sign of frustrated genius) squanders it in style.

(This article was first published in a shorter form by the Canadian film magazine *Take One*.)

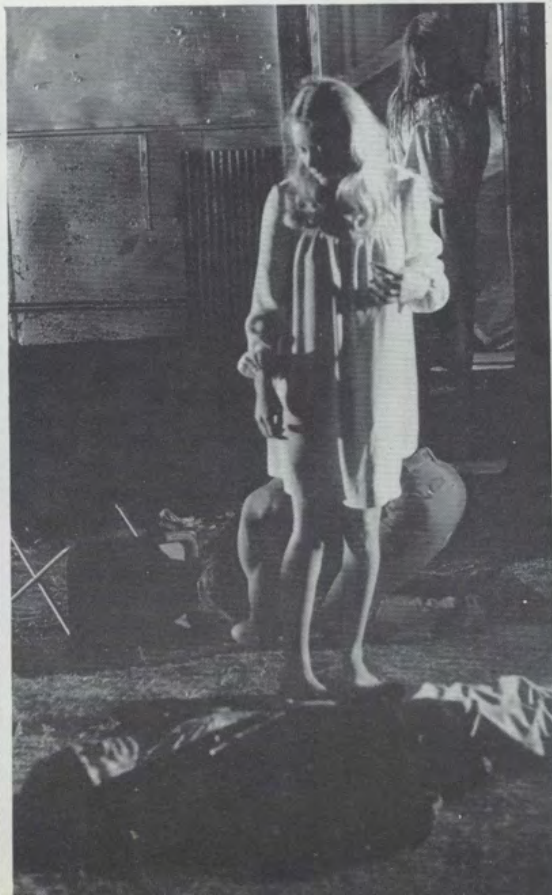
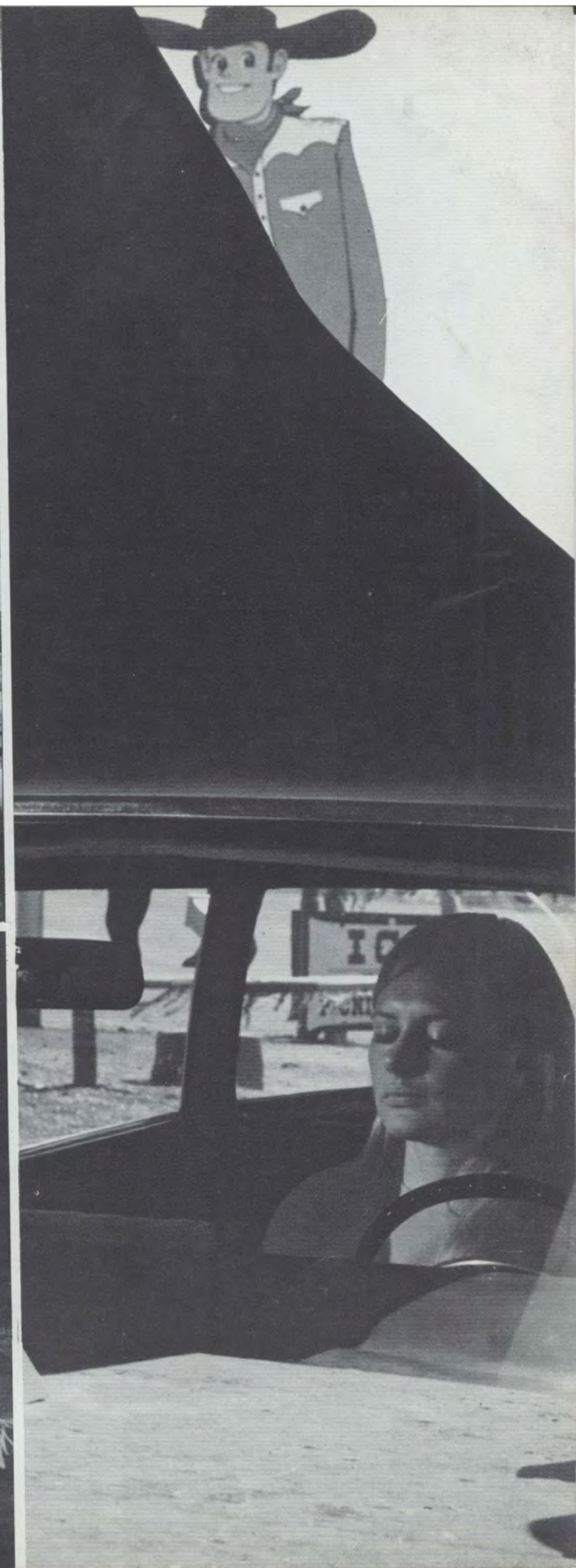


# THE RAIN PEOPLE

Francis Ford Coppola's film about a girl driving across the United States with a hitch-hiker. With Shirley Knight, James Caan and Robert Duvall.











Festivals 69

# CANNES





**M**EANWHILE, BACK ON the Croisette . . . After the scuttling of the Cannes Festival last year, perhaps only those with a serene faith in the built-in survival power of institutions really expected to see it refloat again quite so soon, and on the face of it quite so unchanged. The sun shines on a cynically blue sea; bulldozers and pneumatic drills are as always tearing up the town; the police are tucked discreetly into little black vans just around the corner, and there don't seem to be significantly more of them than usual.

Complaints about film selection seem to have been answered by throwing the various fringe activities more wide open than ever. The festival bulletin lists thirty to forty screenings a day, all the way from *I Love Blue* and *Without a Stitch On* to films about Rhodesia, about deserters from Vietnam, and the first of the flock of Che Guevara movies. Complaints about evening dress and general frivolous haven't noticeably been bothered with. No doubt it is moderately ridiculous, if you want to make something of it, that audiences should parade in their finery to watch films avid for destruction of just this social set-up. But as often, the protestors are attacking images as much as realities. There are plenty of alternative opportunities to see the films less formally; and if festivals are staged in expensive playgrounds, they are never really going to look like workers' educational congresses.

Of course, it becomes increasingly difficult for Cannes to sustain its self-perpetuating image of feverish glamour in the face of what is actually on the screen. And the search for that mysterious animal, a 'festival film', still leads some people extravagantly astray. M-G-M, for instance, must have felt distinctly hurt at the reception given Sidney Lumet's *The Appointment*. With cast-iron romantic stars (Anouk Aimée, Omar Sharif), camerawork by Carlo Di Palma, some Antonioni musings, and a 'sophisticated' plot about a husband who suspects his wife of spending her afternoons at a *Belle de Jour* establishment presided over by Lotte Lenya, they must have thought they had chosen rather well. They met some of the festival's happiest laughter, particularly when Lumet essays one of those daft romantic helicopter shots which begins hovering over a recumbent couple and staggers up to take in a vast slice of scenery. There are some things you just can't get away with any more, and this is one of them.

At the other end of the spectrum, one sat dutifully through a film like Vojtech Jasný's *Moravian Chronicle* because what it had to say about the failure of Communist agricultural planning was obviously bold and relevant. But again Jasný seems to have tried to make a 'festival film' out of it, opening each sequence with a lyrical flutter, all waving corn or horses cantering through snow. Perhaps one was meant to feel that the village was a kind of earthly paradise flung from grace by errors of collectivisation, but the effect was of a film hauling itself towards 'art' by its bootstraps.

The contrast makes a film like Miklós Jancsó's extraordinary *Confrontation* seem even more exemplary. Its period is 1947, and its basic encounter is between a group of Communist students, the boys of a church school, and authority in assorted forms. They arrive dancing and singing, happy revolutionaries led by a hopeful, civilised idealist in a red shirt. But red shirt loses out to a sturdy girl in trousers who advocates sterner persuasion; then she in turn is dismissed, this time for exceeding her revolutionary brief. As always, Jancsó leaves you feeling the presence of a power behind the scenes, a system which will give everyone the rope to hang himself, will compile the dossiers and note the deviations and in the end negate what look like decisions arrived at by free will.

So, it's a Jancsó film—and rather less different in manner than I had been led to expect. It is sometimes sharply nostalgic (Jancsó himself went through this period); but if the start is sunnier and the mood more open, the patterns still work themselves out with the same devastating dialectical clarity. This, you feel, is where the schoolboys of *If . . .* would end up if they got their revolution: face to face with the deteriora-

tion of their own motives, and with the power behind the symbols. The film's movement is a ceaseless and complex pattern of dancing, circling and prowling; though at his press conference Jancsó characteristically ducked any suggestion that it had a symbolic purpose. "I know," he said, when one woman complained that the incessant to-and-fro made her seasick. "I'm sorry if you don't like it, but it seems to be the way I make films . . ." The way he has made this one apparently baffled a lot of people, who seemed thrown by its directness and eager for inscrutability. But *Confrontation* is exactly what it purports to be: a look at the faces of socialism by a man who, of course, remains a convinced socialist; and who, one ought perhaps to add, was at work on this film before May 1968.

*Confrontation* is an impossible film to write about: one can't convey the impetus of its action, the mixture of exhilaration and despair, and without it the picture is likely to sound dismally abstract. Almost equally difficult to get across is the very precise attraction of Eric Rohmer's *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*. Another in his series of *Contes Moraux*, it concerns an engineer in his mid-thirties, self-sufficient, slightly smug in his view of himself as a good Catholic, but rather lonely and hesitant. He is convinced, without actually doing much about it, that he's going to marry a girl he has only watched in church. Then, during a dull Christmas break, he runs into a friend who takes him to see the tantalising, divorced, disbelieving Maud. The apparent detour puts him back on the track: he marries the girl. But the film pivots on the long conversation in Maud's flat, that 'who is more Jansenist than whom' dialogue which is so quintessentially in the French Catholic tradition that the Protestant mind puts up barriers. Rohmer's film instantly shatters them. It is beautifully played, by Jean-Louis Trintignant and Françoise Fabian, beautifully phrased, timed and watched; and it involves one not only with the characters, who are rarely three-dimensional, but with the whole unobtrusive setting of Clermont Ferrand in winter, the lacklustre holiday, people at loose ends prepared to experiment with each other. In an over-heated festival, *Ma Nuit Chez Maud* had the effect of iced champagne: cool, sparkling, honest and—in the way the French like to use the word—*sérieux*.

In the over-heated category came Glauber Rocha's *Antonio das Mortes*, a Brazilian saga about a glum, cloaked slayer of bandits, the *cangaceiro* he is hired to dispose of, a blind land-owner, and a lady in purple who stabs her discarded lover some forty times, joins the cortège lugging him into the desert, and then rolls wildly all over the corpse with a new lover. Admirers, of whom there were quite a few, found it operatic, not to say Jacobean; but I would have thought there was opera and opera. And among the other disappointments, Kobayashi's *Journal of an Exhausted Man*, about a Tokyo businessman ground down by the rat-race, and Giuseppe Patroni Griffi's *Metti, una Sera a Cena*. The Kobayashi limps through resignation themes from Ozu and business skulduggery themes from Kurosawa, a long way after either. The Patroni Griffi concerns a kind of workable *ménage à quatre* (writer, wife, other man, other woman) which is disrupted when the wife falls madly for a sullen youth, nicely described in the hand-out as a 'mercenary of love', who enjoys draping himself in swastika flags. This theatrical, voyeuristic piece begins and ends like a really good picture; but its splintered, self-conscious sophistication, and final get-out reference to the Chinese bomb that's going to finish us all, are a long way from the elegantly thoughtful atmospherics of *Il Mare*.

Britain's entry was well enough balanced to scoop the acting prize for Vanessa Redgrave in *Isadora* and the Grand Prix for Lindsay Anderson's *If . . .* More could hardly be asked, or expected. In fact, Paramount had been realistically confident enough to say ahead of time that they felt *If . . .* was only seriously challenged by *Z*, Costa Gavras' political melodrama based on the Lambrakis case and filmed in Algeria. *Z* is gripping in subject matter and very efficiently ordinary in treatment, though it's interesting to see Jorge Semprun, who wrote *La Guerre est Finie*, decorating his script with reminders of Resnais. But even the cast (Yves

OPPOSITE PAGE: ABOVE: TRINTIGNANT IN "MA NUIT CHEZ MAUD". LEFT: "CONFRONTATION". RIGHT: "ANDREI ROUBLEV".



Montand as the murdered deputy, Trintignant as the investigator), Theodorakis' music, and the impact of the political killing, the protest marches and the police in riot formation, can't make it more than a shrewd *pièce d'occasion*.

There remains, mysteriously towering, Tarkovsky's **Andrei Rublev**. The Russians disapprove; their delegation wasn't obviously in evidence at the screening, which was put on by the film's French distributor, and there seemed some uncertainty about just who had cut the forty minutes missing from this version and whether the reason was monotony or politics. The opening is breathtaking and unexplained: a 15th-century balloon ascent (or escape) over a bare, watery landscape, with oarsmen racing up like the finish of the Eights at Henley. Then into the wanderings of Andrei Rublev, itinerant priest and icon painter, and his explicit search for faith to release his works. The Tartars are on the march; the peasantry exist in semi-pagan desolation; the questioning Rublev is told only that it will always be like this, that the icons will be washed away and the buildings sacked, but the artist holds on. It is a big, brooding, poetic, untidy film, sometimes flattening out into tedium, turning aside for the long landscape with horses, flinging itself into the barbarism of the Tartar assault. It has those Soviet virtues of weight and historical scale that one almost takes for granted, and a visionary emphasis belonging to an older tradition. Tarkovsky looks down a long perspective; seeing further, perhaps, than any Russian film-maker of this decade.

Three, finally and briefly, from the fringe. From the Critics' Week, Judit Elek's **The Lady from Constantinople**, which is attentive, watchful and unsentimental about the problems of a lonely but snobbish old woman looking for a lodging in Budapest; and Robert Benayoun's **Paris n'existe pas**, which takes a beautiful idea—young man finds that he can see through layers of the past, first in his own flat, then out in the streets of Paris—and handles it decoratively but rather tamely and modishly. And from elsewhere, Peter Watkins' ambitious and angry **The Gladiators**, made in Sweden and dealing with computer-run war games of the future, which like so much of his work suggests the splutterings of a very bright schoolboy who has just discovered that the world is a place of iniquity. In a less crowded festival, all three would demand more comment; but Cannes this year was perhaps more than itself again.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

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FOR ME, THE BEST FILM in competition was Bo Widerberg's **Adalen 31**, winner of the Special Jury Prize. A self-styled synthesis of *Raven's End* and *Elvira Madigan*, it had both the wider social content of the first, and the pure cinematic beauty of the second. But *Adalen* is more than the sum of these two parts, for Widerberg has gone beyond the occasional clumsiness and descends into the purely well-meaning of *Raven's End*, just as he has transcended the occasional aestheticism of *Elvira Madigan*.

It is of course a romantic film; Swedish writers have criticised what they call the prettification of lower-class life in the early 1930s. Maybe they're right; I don't know, and I don't care. As Paul Eluard once replied when he was taxed with 'formalism': "Nothing is too beautiful to say the truth." And, whatever softening of the social conflict there may be in *Adalen*, it does look and sound like the truth—not naturalistic veracity, but artistic truth. The story follows a family of workers on strike, from their simply passive endurance to the committed stage of conflict: Swedish socialism, it would seem, was not very easily won. And Widerberg's own comment on his supposed aestheticism is included in the film itself. The eldest son has been having a clandestine affair with the daughter of the local factory owner—a well-meaning, humanistic gentleman, whose wife has been giving improvised art history lessons to Kjell. Teaching him to pronounce properly 'Pierre Auguste Renoir', for example. By the end of the film, when this delightfully civilised lady has tricked her daughter into aborting their child, and when her no less charming husband has called out the army, thus making himself directly responsible for the death of Kjell's father and

brother, Kjell, who has at last come to the realisation of what lay behind their gracious way of life, simply repeats to the father, 'Pierre Auguste Renoir, not Rey-noir, Re-noir.'

And of course the film looks like a Renoir; but the impressionistic contouring of light, and the warm, rich colours, do not I think soften it. Rather they make the same contrasting point that Kjell makes. For the dialectical gap between the beauty of the film and the horror of its subject seems to me precisely what *Adalen* is all about.

What with the cancelling of the screening of the new Bresson film and the refusal of the Etats Généraux du Cinéma to participate (with sublime logic, they replied "A counter-festival is but an inversion of the festival and in fact only reproduces the same artificial patterns"), the greatest excitement of the Directors' Fortnight organised by the Société des Réalisateurs Français was Susan Sontag's Swedish film **Duet for Cannibals**. Not only had she written and directed a film without any previous experience, but she had also done it in Swedish. All this was very surprising; but then, so was the film, even to her old friends like me.

First of all, she made the discovery while shooting the film that it was going to be very different from the films of the directors whom she admires the most (i.e. Godard). Instead, it turned out more like metaphysical Hitchcock (i.e. Fritz Lang). The villain of the piece, a political refugee in Sweden, is a kind of Dr. Mabuse figure, and so is his wife (played by Adriana Asti, the star of *Before the Revolution*). The two of them play an elaborate kind of Albee game with a younger couple; in fact, their attempts to destroy the younger couple would seem to be the only thing that keeps their Strindbergian marriage together. But the film is not all that Swedish; in many ways, it seemed very American, in the *Games People Play* sense. (Perhaps it is only in economically secure countries that people can indulge their playful sense of sadism.) Except for a few *longueurs* (which should be attributed to the director's inability to make the Swedes talk any faster than they usually do, which is pretty slow), the film is fascinatingly compelling, visually inventive, and—this is the New York side—very funny indeed, for those with a strong moral stomach. The excellent cast includes Agneta Ekman, Gosta Ekman and Lars Ekborg. As a writer's first film, it seemed more successful to me than those of Robbe-Grillet, Duras, or (God knows) Mailer.

I think one of the reasons I liked **Easy Rider** so much is that it could have been so terrible. Dope, hippies, the road, revolt, etc. have been the subjects of so many bad movies that, although *Easy Rider* is by no means an imperishable masterpiece, one is pleased to see a film which treats these dangerous subjects so honestly and so well. Some complained that it was but an extended travelogue; but then, that is its subject. Two young motorcyclists who have just come into some cash from cocaine smuggling decide to ride from Los Angeles to New Orleans, for the Mardi Gras carnival. Their trip is in a sense a search for their own country, a rediscovery of the United States in 1969. And what they see only confirms to them how right they were to drop out of contemporary American society; while at the same time they (or at least we) are touched by the occasional left-overs they meet from an earlier day, before the American dream turned into a nightmare. The riders are Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper (who also directed). They are fine, but the real star of the film is Jack Nicholson, whose portrayal of a small-town alcoholic lawyer who drops everything, digs out his old football helmet and takes off on the road is startlingly fresh. I only hope the references to drugs won't get it banned in Britain. Apart from the failure of the LSD sequence (but they *never* work on film) it's a pretty good movie.

Although it was screened in the Palais du Festival, Jakubisko's **Deserter and the Nomads** was not in competition, apparently because a diplomatic incident between the Czechoslovaks and the Russians was feared. It first turned up in Venice last year as an hour-long film called *The Deserter*, to which Jakubisko has since added a second long sequence which takes place at the end of the last war, and which shows

*Continued on page 163*



# Everything for sale



## Colin McArthur

"[In Poland] art fulfils a special function . . . it carries a certain burden of tradition through the fact that for a hundred years the state did not exist, or it existed only in literature, in art, to which everyone could refer. Art was the reflection and . . . the only real political life of the country. That's why our art in Poland does not move towards positions . . . aesthetic, psychological introspective experiences of man, but always finds its place in the social sphere. . . . A way must be found of breaking out of that range of themes, some way of linking up (with these introspective experiences), but it can't be a simple way."—Andrzej Wajda, in an interview with Boleslaw Sulik (1967).

"I am always less interested in [film *per se*] than in what it can express . . . I don't think it's right that film should feed on itself. I think it should feed on reality."—*Ibid.*

**I**N EVERYTHING FOR SALE Wajda has triumphantly forged the link and, as he prophesied, the process was far from simple. The catalyst seems quintessential both of Wajda and of Poland: the death of a hero, Zbigniew Cybulski. The resulting film is both public and private, a memorial to the dead actor, a personal testament of the director and, crucially, a work

which shatters the artistic fetters which have bound Wajda throughout his career. Feeding both on reality and on film, *Everything for Sale* is Wajda's meditation on a theme, illusion and reality, which has preoccupied not only some of the cinema's most vital artists (Renoir, Godard, Antonioni), but also major figures in the other arts (Joyce, Pirandello, Magritte). At one blow he has matured from an extremely interesting, visually exciting artist whose work was fully comprehensible only in the Polish context to an international artist who happens to be Polish.

And yet, has the change been quite so sudden? A film of the stature and achievement of *Everything for Sale* induces the critic to reassess Wajda's past work, to investigate the possibility that films which may have seemed at the time total write-offs, or relative successes in a minor key, may also have been confused gropings in the artist's search for a new direction, growing pains in his attaining maturity. Certainly many critics would agree that Wajda's progress from *A Generation*, through *Kanal*, *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Lotna to Ashes*, was not simply that of an artist maturing within a theme (in all these films the recurrent tragedy of Polish history), but possibly also that of an artist trapped in a theme.

Such a reading would partly account for the stylistic over-ripeness of *Lotna* and the sprawling quality of *Ashes*. It would





BEATA TYSZKIEWICZ AND DANIEL OLBRYCHSKI: SCENE OF CYBULSKI'S DEATH.

also account for the complete anomaly of *Innocent Sorcerers*, Wajda's weakest and least typical film, in which he desperately eschewed the large canvas and stylistic richness which are his strengths to produce a work scarcely existing above script level. In such a reading of his career, the crucial transitional film becomes, surprisingly, his pleasing half-hour episode in *Love at Twenty*, in which he regains force and richness of imagery (animals in the zoo, figures in snowscapes) without the somewhat academic conception of strong imagery which had characterised his work up to *Lotna*. The *Love at Twenty* episode is also thematically transitional. The core of the piece is the inability of the post-war Polish generation to comprehend the experience of the Resistance, and it is by no means a simplistically conceived condemnation of modern youth. In retrospect it seems like an initial move towards the judgment on resistance art expressed by a character in *Everything for Sale*: "Dead men, dead causes, dead pictures."

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There are certain facts which must be noted prior to any critical assessment of *Everything for Sale*. The film-within-the-film bears the same title; the leading players appear under their own names; the director of the film-within-the-film is played by Andrzej Lapicki, is therefore known as Andrzej, and bears some physical resemblance to Wajda. Beata (Tyszkiewicz), Andrzej's wife in the film, is in reality Mrs. Wajda and may have been involved with Cybulski at some time in the past. Similarly, Elzbieta (Czyzewska), Cybulski's wife/mistress in the film, may have been involved with the real Cybulski. Further, many of the characters may be expressing sentiments they hold in reality: it is widely known, for instance, that Bogumil Kobiela's attack on the making of the film-within-a-film accords with his views on the making of *Everything for Sale*. Clearly these facts indicate the primary level at which film/illusion and reality are interpenetrated, and point forward to the working out of this theme within the texture of the film.

The theme is expressed in our temporary uncertainty, from time to time, about whether we are watching the film or the film-within-the-film. This is most striking in the opening: a squat, sheepskin-jacketed figure wearing dark glasses runs out of the dusk into a railway station; his train has already moved off and is picking up speed; he runs along the platform beside it. This is an extremely painful experience for the audience, for we know exactly what is going to happen, and the time-span of this action, extended far beyond the requirements of realism (which, needless to say, is not Wajda's aim), raises us to a pitch of horror. The figure leaps, falls between the coaches, and the train grinds to a halt. Whereupon the figure (it is Andrzej, the director, standing in for the actor who has failed to appear) hauls himself up on the platform and asks the camera crew, "How was that?"

The audience is similarly disoriented in the scene in which Ela visits Beata and attempts suicide. It is only when the blood is seeping through the towel on her wrist that we hear the cry of "cut!" and realise we are watching the film-within-the-film, despite the fact that a clapper-board appears in close-up before the scene. Large tracts of the film are composed in such a way as to blur the distinction between players and audience. The lateral tracking shot which had become almost a stylistic signature for Wajda (especially in *Kanal*, *Ashes and Diamonds* and *Lotna*) gives way to the track towards the camera, and the actors frequently speak their lines alone in the frame rather than in two-shot and often, but never quite directly, into camera.

Thus the very general question of illusion and reality is posed in the *mise en scène* and reappears in different forms throughout, even in the relatively minor incident in which Andrzej and Beata appear to drive over a body in the road which turns out to be a dummy the police have laid there to test the reactions of motorists. However, the most central expression of the appearance/reality theme is in terms of the truth or falsity of emotion, or, put in abstract, antinomic terms, whether life or art is the more important. Ela, attending



a party, dresses up and in a very moving speech confides to Andrzej her loneliness and alienation. Immediately, Andrzej's assistant director emerges from hiding in a cupboard, notebook and pencil in hand, jubilant that he has got it all down and that it will make great dialogue for their film.

The abstract implication of the theme, the polarity of art and life, is realised in the complex scene in which the car driven by Andrzej brakes very suddenly, causing him to cut his head on the driving mirror. While Ela goes to moisten a handkerchief to wipe away the blood, Andrzej gets out a camera and photographs the wound. Like many of the crucial images in the film, this scene telescopes several themes. As well as stating the life versus art dichotomy, it reminds us that *Everything for Sale* is a film about Andrzej Wajda, an extremely frank confession of the stresses within his artistic sensibility and even within his psyche. Andrzej's photographing of his own wound carries sado-masochistic overtones, a charge often made, sometimes in crassly simplistic terms, against Wajda's work as a whole. Even allowing for the degree to which his preoccupation with heroism, defeat and death has pulled him towards images of violence, Wajda as artist seems to be fascinated to a remarkable extent with images of mutilation (the one-legged men in *A Generation*, *Siberian Lady Macbeth* and *Ashes* and the one-legged girl in *Kanal*) and with spectacular images of painful death (the killing of the cement workers and of Maciek in *Ashes and Diamonds*). At their most baroque, these images often incorporate their own obverse of life and beauty, like the corpse festooned with bandages in the bridal bed in *Lotna*. It is possible to read the scene in which Andrzej photographs his wound as Wajda's confession of this impulse in himself. This frankness is apparent in the hints of stress in Andrzej's marriage and in his detachment from the trendy Warsaw film coterie whom Ela sends into orbit on a merry-go-round. It is known that Wajda holds apart from this group.

Andrzej's final placing of the directorial function into the hands of his assistant director is both frank and playful. It is both an admission that there is some truth in the much-repeated rumour that Wajda leaves some of the direction of his films to his crew and actors and also a two-fingered sign to the perpetrators of that rumour. However, on another level the scene reminds us that *Everything for Sale* is an artistic testament. It tells us that he is seeking to distance himself from the tortured heroes represented by Tadeusz Janczar (*A Generation* and *Kanal*), Zbigniew Cybulski (*Ashes and Diamonds*) and Daniel Olbrychski (*Ashes* and *Everything for Sale*). At the same time he realises the epiphanies of *Everything for Sale* in terms of his most personally meaningful image, horses. Cybulski's death is announced on a transistor radio which Ela and Beata have in their car. The car horn sounds, the sun burns brightly on the windscreen and a great surge of galloping horses comes past. Similarly, during the filming of the actor's death scene for the film-within-the-film, the horses once more gallop past, this time to be joined by Daniel,

ELA (CZYZEWSKA) MOISTENING HER HANDKERCHIEF IN THE ICY RIVER.



running among them, his arms outstretched with the joy of the experience. This is the scene which ends the film and the film-within-the-film; but as the assistant director follows Daniel with his camera we are reminded that Wajda cannot resolve the dichotomy between art and life, that even this epiphany, this most personally realised of moments, is, like everything else, for sale.

\* \* \*

But what of the film as a memorial to Cybulski? Like Julius Caesar in the second half of Shakespeare's play, and Rebecca in Hitchcock's film, Cybulski completely dominates the lives of the characters in *Everything for Sale* although he does not appear. Again, such is the integrity of the film that the portrait is presented warts and all. Cybulski's immaturity is recalled as Ela, thinking he is in the bathroom of their flat, calls out, "When will you stop behaving like a teenager? You're forty years old," and his womanising in the incident in the provincial town where he presents a floral bouquet (his usual idealising and gallant offering) to an impressionable girl who wants to become an actress.

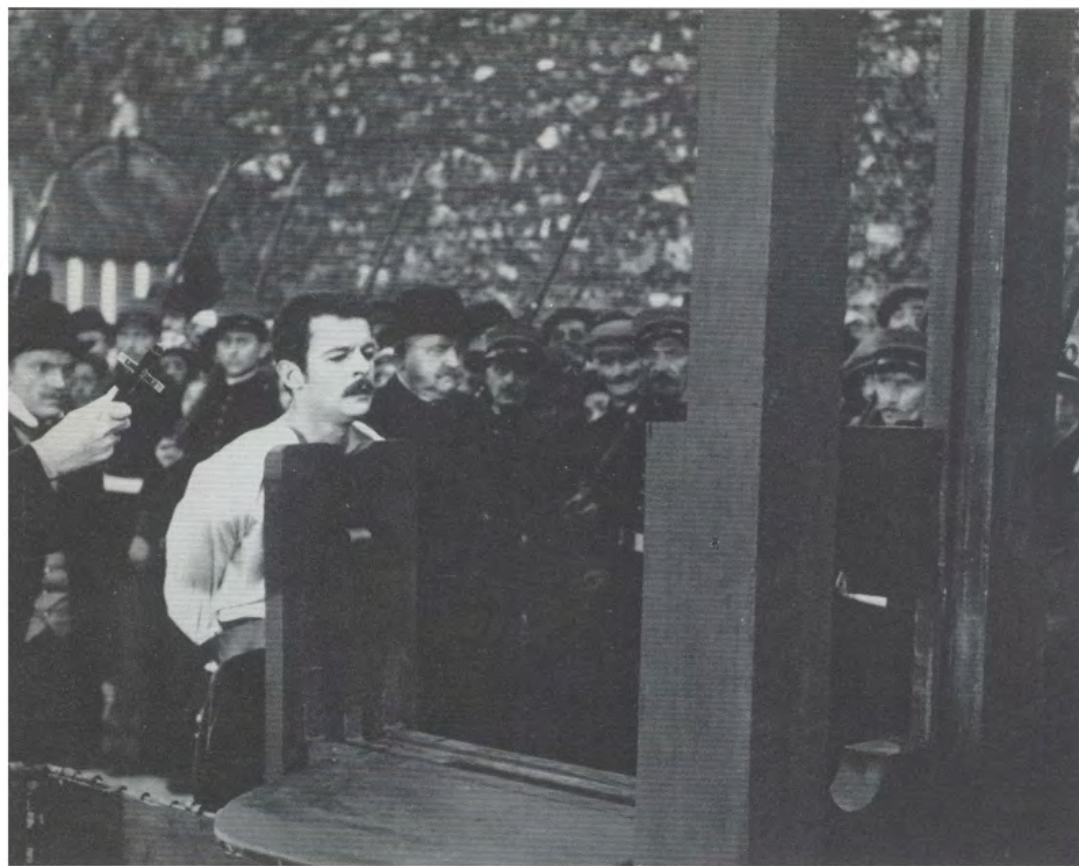
Cybulski, in *Ashes and Diamonds*, had captured the imagination of a generation of young Poles, many of whom adopted his dark glasses, his rucksack, and his air of restless transience. He seems, too, to have had a special kind of charisma for his colleagues and friends. Bogumil Kobiela, who was closely associated with Cybulski in the student satirical theatre Bim-Bom, makes a speech at the party in *Everything for Sale* and an onlooker observes, "He's quoting him word for word. I once interviewed him for the foreign press." The taxi-driver who takes him from Warsaw to the provincial town waits all night for him and proudly displays the youth badge Cybulski had given him in lieu of a fare. It is said that Daniel Olbrychski has something of the same effect on Polish youth of the sixties. Wajda presents him as, quite literally at one point, taking on the mantle of Cybulski. He goes to a night-club, but is refused entry because he is not wearing a jacket. A porter gives him one which Cybulski left there, and in the bar he and the assistant director re-enact the scene in *Ashes and Diamonds* in which Maciek (Cybulski) and Andrzej (Adam Pawlikowski) light the glasses of vodka and recall dead comrades. A middle-aged and grave Pawlikowski looks down the bar and watches them impassively.

As an actor, Olbrychski is very much in the Cybulski tradition, tense, energetic and impulsive, though considerably less mannered. Beata remarks that he and Cybulski are very much alike although he tries so hard to be different. Cybulski's belongings by this time have become relics, and it is Olbrychski who retrieves Cybulski's German cup from the side of the railway track, presumably to retain it as his right. The legend, the relics, the devotion, all have mythic overtones, and the Cybulski myth is seen to be growing as Daniel, Beata and Ela seek out a resistance comrade of the dead actor to verify the story of his involvement with the Resistance. However, Wajda does not allow us to view the myth uncritically, as can be gauged from possibly the most striking scene in the film. After Cybulski's death has become known, the leading figures are seen in black, walking with downcast eyes. We assume that they are walking in his cortège until we see that they are in a film studio, and following a trolley bearing cans of film, as it turns out the film of Cybulski's funeral. Like so many of the images of *Everything for Sale*, this one is complex and resonant. It encapsulates the several expressions of the appearance/reality theme: in terms of the film's relationship with the audience, in terms of Wajda's preoccupation with the dichotomy between art and life, and in terms of the source of Cybulski's charisma; whether the myth is growing round the man or his celluloid image.

*Everything for Sale* exemplifies the eternal mystery of artistic creation. Out of a devastating personal tragedy Wajda has wrought a masterpiece. We must mourn with the man and rejoice with the artist.

(I am greatly indebted to Boleslaw Sulik for a long conversation about *EVERYTHING FOR SALE* and the Polish film scene.—C.McA.)





Gilberto Pérez Guillermo

# JACQUES BECKER



Swiftly the years, beyond recall.  
Solemn the stillness of this spring morning.  
(From Arthur Waley's version of a Chinese poem.)

THE HUMAN MIND has two main scales on which to measure time. The large one takes the length of a human life as its unit, so that there is nothing to be done about life, it is of an animal dignity and simplicity, and must be regarded from a peaceable and fatalistic point of view. The small one takes as its unit the conscious moment, and it is from this that you consider the neighbouring space, an activity of the will, delicacies of social tone, and your personality. The scales are so far apart as almost to give the effect of defining two dimensions; they do not come into contact because what is too large to be conceived by the one is still too small to be conceived by the other. Thus, taking the units as a century and the quarter of a second, their ratio is ten to the tenth and their mean is the standard working day; or taking the smaller one as five minutes, their mean is the whole of summer. The repose and self-command given by the use of the first are contrasted with the speed at which it shows the years to be passing from you, and therefore with the fear of death; the fever and multiplicity of life, as known by the use of the second, are contrasted with the calm of the external space of which it gives consciousness, with the absolute or extra-temporal value attached to the brief moments of self-knowledge with which it is concerned, and with a sense of security in that it makes death so far off.

Both these time-scales and their contrasts are included by these two lines in a single act of apprehension, because of the words *swift* and *still*. Being contradictory as they stand, they demand to be conceived in different ways; we are enabled, therefore, to meet the open skies with an answering stability of self-knowledge; to meet the brevity of human life with an ironical sense that it is morning and springtime, that there is a whole summer before winter, a whole day before night.

WILLIAM EMPSON:  
*Seven Types of Ambiguity.*

## TWO FILMS

We looked, we loved, and therewith instantly  
Death became terrible to you and me.  
By love we disenthralled our natural terror  
From every comfortable philosopher  
Or tall, grey doctor of divinity:  
Death stood at last in his true rank and  
order.

ROBERT GRAVES: *Pure Death*



JACQUES BECKER, the late French film-maker, read in 1947 the newspaper report of an extraordinary escape attempt made by five prisoners who were awaiting trial at the Santé prison in Paris. The prisoners had succeeded, after much laborious digging, in making their way to the sewers; but they were betrayed by one of their group. Becker wrote at the time a rough draft for a film treatment of this episode. Some years later a novel was published on the same subject, and then—with the author of the novel as a collaborator on the screenplay, three of the original prisoners as technical advisers and one also as a leading actor—Becker made the film. He completed *Le Trou* shortly before he died in 1960 at the age of fifty-three.

In his earlier *Casque d'Or* the plot was derived as well from a newspaper police report, and the setting is also a low social milieu. *Casque d'Or* is a period film, with some of the decorative glare of Paris, 1900; yet it has much of the same solidity, and directness of concentrated energy, as *Le Trou*. Becker was for a long time assistant to Jean Renoir, and his re-creation of the past in *Casque d'Or* sometimes recalls the naturalness and charm of *Partie de Campagne*. But in Becker's film there is an intensity and fierceness quite alien to the gentle Renoir. "A suffocating film," wrote Vernon Young, "its barely contained passion exerted an unbearable pressure on the spectator." The plot of *Casque d'Or* is violent and melodramatic. It is a tortuous plot (unlike that of *Le Trou*), but its core is a simple story of love and death. Between Marie (Simone Signoret), a beautiful gigolette with a *casque* of golden hair, and the carpenter Manda (Serge Reggiani), a sexual passion is aroused when they first meet which develops into a deep and tender love. But a few days together in the country is all the lovers can enjoy. Manda kills two men—one in a knife-duel, the other in a furious act of revenge—and at the close of the film we witness, with Marie, his execution.

\* \* \*

Jacques Becker was able to communicate with peculiar intensity a sense of the physical world. His declared master was Erich von Stroheim, but in fact his films are very different

from Stroheim's (and much better). His films depend not on the gross accumulation but on the selection and heightening of physical detail; he could bring sensuously alive a drab and sparse prison setting. And with Becker the sensuous life of the physical environment is inseparable from the life of the characters. Objects, even when they are perceived as closely as are the tools that the prisoners use in their attempted escape in *Le Trou*, are with him always perceived in a context of human activity and human meaning.

Like that other great sensual director, Dovzhenko—who invested even the clouds in *Aerograd* with the solidity almost of marble—Becker could, by the power and poetry of his observation, lift an object, a gesture, out of time, and give the quarter of a second the authority of an eternity. He could capture by his selection and compression, as Stroheim with his lack of proper focus could not, the timeless immediacy of the moment.

There are no prolonged and explicit love scenes in *Casque d'Or*; there is, instead, that radiant quarter of a second in which Marie, surrounded by the almost tangible freshness of the early-morning countryside, takes the bowl of coffee that Manda offers her and drinks from it. Death and decay are at that moment inconceivable, we are so absorbed in the richness of life. The solidity of that moment is indestructible: we derive from it that sense of security and absoluteness which belongs, as Empson says, to the small time-scale.

More complex (though technically still simple) is another remarkable scene, the one of Manda's execution. This (set too in the early morning) is a scene of almost equal solidity and sensuous immediacy, in which we are as aware of the bulk and texture of things; and yet it is a scene of death. As Lindsay Anderson pointed out in his review of the film in *SIGHT AND SOUND*, Becker here, returning repeatedly to Marie as she watches all from a window, breaks down the event into a number of sharp discrete impressions. This gives the scene its peculiar quality. Continuous physical motion is our most common metaphor for the passage of time. If, for instance, Becker had chosen to follow Manda on the way to the guillotine in an unbroken travelling shot, the scene would

"CASQUE D'OR". SERGE REGGIANI IN THE EXECUTION SEQUENCE AND (LEFT) WITH SIMONE SIGNORET.





have become, almost of itself, a visual metaphor for the passing of Manda's life and the coming of his death. But what Becker gives us here is not the continuous but the quick, abrupt motion, the glimpse of the massive guillotine, of its bright descending blade: he makes us focus on the harsh isolated moment.

This being the moment of death, it yet brings to mind the large time-scale of which it is the end-point. So we get then, almost inevitably, that beautiful final shot of Marie and Manda dancing away in the riverside café where they first met, a shot which of course is, not least of all in its brevity, a metaphor for the passage of human life. Thus, as in the lines that Empson quotes from one of Arthur Waley's translations of Chinese poems, the two time-scales are here put side by side; and here, as in the poem, the two tend to merge into a single complex apprehension of the event.

In Waley's Chinese poem, however, the effect of those two lines is chiefly to induce in the reader an ironic self-awareness before the event. Our picture of the fine spring morning remains much what it would be otherwise; only, it is now mixed in our thoughts with a simultaneous awareness of the swiftness and brevity of our lives. Becker's film is different. Our picture of the actual event is here harsh and unexpected. The two time-scales are caused to merge by the very manner of our perception. For Becker puts before us the moment of death unyieldingly as a concrete conscious moment—when otherwise we should very probably follow the strong tendency to abstract it from its physical setting and view it as the conclusion toward which a whole life has been moving. Manda at the guillotine. Our perception of the event is pulled in opposite directions by the two incompatible time-scales: on one side the pattern and abstraction that we almost by instinct seek to impose; on the other side the fragmented immediacy of Becker's actual rendering. It is as if every image, every detail, every expression on a face were bound by invisible lines of force emanating from both these opposite pulls; a slight motion, a simple cut, sets up vibrations which inseparably engage both opposite ways of perceiving the event. The shot of Marie and Manda dancing, with its explicit embodying of the large time-scale, comes then as a brief final relaxation of the accumulated tightness.

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Only Jacques Becker has photographed the moment of death—and he has done it twice. It is not, of course, literally death that he photographs at the end of *Le Trou*, when all of a sudden seemingly the entire prison-guard force falls on the prisoners before they can escape; but it is the sort of moment which ends abruptly a pattern of life, and which in so doing inevitably brings to mind the whole pattern from its beginning.

Again Becker chooses to depict the immediate moment, again partly as a way of heightening the horror and brutality of the event, and again as the expression ultimately of a moral stand, of a passionate refusal to present death—or the sudden overturning of things—from a 'peaceable and fatalistic point of view'. This refusal, this stand, general as it is, requires for its full statement the utmost concreteness. With Becker, the vividness of concrete detail (or the apparent modesty of his aims: he likened himself to an entomologist) mustn't blind us to an informing idea, a general meaning. A general meaning, however, it should perhaps be stressed, is seldom with Becker a social meaning. His concern is not with the socially representative but with the private, with the quality and resonance that things take on in a special situation, with love, friendship, the small group of men. Before the guillotine in *Casque d'Or*, for all the hard public impersonality of an execution, we are made to sense the fearful privacy of death.

Society, as Lindsay Anderson says in his valuable review, is not blamed for Manda's death. Although the hardships and humiliations of prison life are not shirked in *Le Trou* (one need only remember the brutally mechanical cutting up, all done with one soiled knife, of the various foods in the parcels sent to the prisoners), surely the last thing one would want to call that film is an exposé of prison conditions. In blaming society for a given human situation, the situation's particularity, if approached at all, is approached only by way of social

generality; whereas it is with the particular that Becker begins, and the particular, after it has been given its due, that generates with him the impulse to move toward the general.

There is in the Parisian Becker something of that love for the trivial which characterises what Ortega y Gasset has called the Mediterranean man. Love for the trivial, it should be emphasised, is not triviality or simple naturalism—though Becker may have at times succumbed to these. To embrace the trivial, the fleeting, the particular, against time's un-arrested flow, and against both a wilful submission to that flow and a detachment from it by abstraction: this is surely not a trivial, but a brave and meaningful stand.

Near the end of *Le Trou*, when all is ready for the prisoners to escape that night, there is a quiet shot of Roland, their leader in the escape attempt, dusting his jacket. From this shot the scene fades to a view, now at night, of the prison corridor as seen through the toothbrush periscope that the prisoners have devised. Then we see the men in their eager final preparations to go: Roland polishing his shoes, Gaspard combing his hair, Manu tying Monseigneur's blanket-made tie. Outside, briefly glimpsed through the periscope, lies the prison corridor, unruffled yet menacing, likely at any time to intrude upon the prisoners' lives. (Twice during the film guards have come to the cell without warning.) Taken in themselves, those last-minute doings are trivial, utterly unimportant; and yet, at the dramatic high point of his film, Becker gives them persistent and affectionate attention. Roland dusting his jacket, a man engrossed in the privacy of an inconsequential act, is pitted against the constraining outside corridor.

At the end, the private and the trivial, the private as expressed in its giving resonance to the trivial, are suddenly overwhelmed. The prisoners are seized; Gaspard, a late-comer to their group whom they never quite trusted, has betrayed them. *Le Trou* closes with the image of a near-empty corridor, restored after the commotion to its regimenting normality. This image is not, for all its quietude, peaceable and fatalistic. Like the last shot in *Casque d'Or*, though in a different way, this is above all an image of loss: a loss which one may, in terms of the large time-scale, accept as inevitable, but which Becker sees as brutal and arbitrary. In *Casque d'Or* the loss is not only of Manda's life but of Marie's and Manda's life together. In *Le Trou* the loss is more than anything of a humanity which the concentrated effort to escape has affirmed and helped define; it is a loss of friendship and intimacy, of the men's energy and joint impetus which had managed a remarkable degree of control over the intolerably restrictive environment; it is a loss of the trivial and unique.

Yet each of these closing shots, after the immediacy and concentration of what has just preceded it, comes almost as a relief. Each is a little abstract and ambiguous, a reflection upon an already past event, full of anger and sadness yet at the same time hinting at the possibility of quiet resignation. A hint of such possibility, at the close of either *Casque d'Or* or *Le Trou*, serves to make us reject it all the more openly. But our rejection must now be wilful. Now we are removed irrevocably from the harsh material presence of the event. Things look hazy to a backward glance, the large-scale view imposes itself—and with it comes, almost unavoidably, a peaceable fatalism. Our resisting this fatalism, yet no longer being able, as we cast a backward glance over the entire film, to get a firm grip on any of those moments which had seemed solid and indestructible, gives the close of each film much of its peculiar poignancy of loss.

## II

FRANCE IS THE ONLY country with a richly continuous and still living Great Tradition of film. I refer not to the French tradition of style and formal polish—of Clair, Bresson and Resnais—but to a parallel and in my opinion much more important French tradition, what I should like to call the tradition of poetry—of Vigo, Renoir, Becker and Truffaut.

Becker I rank with the best French directors on the strength of only two of his thirteen films: *Casque d'Or* and *Le Trou* are the only films of his I know. The others are probably not so









"CASQUE D'OR": THE RADIANT QUARTER OF A SECOND.

good as these two; some may even be mediocre. But it is in his best works that an artist lives, not in his worst or in some auteur-theory composite of all.

The tradition of poetry: I use here the word 'poetry' not loosely but in a sense I shall attempt, if not to define, at least to restrict. Robert Graves, in the preface to a reading of his own poems at the University of Michigan, gives two minimum requirements which he believes poetry must satisfy if it is not to turn into something else. One requirement is a recognisable metre; the other, that every word must be given its full meaning, must be treated as a living thing. Now, if the word 'poetry' is to be used when speaking of film, as I think there is sometimes good reason to use it, it should be used only when film satisfies at least one minimum requirement: images must be treated as living things.

For the avant-gardist, who so often claims the word for himself, 'poetry' is to be found in abstract or nearly abstract films, 'purely visual' patterns of images. This reflects an ignorance of both poetry and film. "The poet is the least abstract of men," wrote T. S. Eliot, "because he is the most bound by his own language." The more concrete, the more vividly particularised a film image is, the more poetic it can become. The more bound a film-maker is by the material world, by the special way things look and sound and feel, the more likely he is to be a poet.

A 'purely visual' film image hasn't much life, like a word used in a poem only for the sound. An image is alive, like a word, largely in the interactive meanings and associations that from our experience it has for us. Empson speaks of a word almost as a solid object, having "a body of meaning continuous in several dimensions." By use in a particular context this meaning can be stretched, but only slightly; a word is in a poem as much a hard external fact as is, in a film, a tree or an upstairs window that comes within view of the camera. That tree and that window, I submit, will be treated poetically only if they are allowed the dignity of hard external facts, only if they are not stripped, for the sake of abstract visual patterns or whatever, of their particular qualities and meanings as objects in a recognisably real world.\*

In film, as in literature, the sensual impact of the medium itself is relatively weak. Film must derive its force, to a much greater degree than music or the plastic arts, from an external reality. Music, being stronger sensually, can be more abstract; film needs the close support of a material world (as poetry needs that of a spoken language) with its complex ramifications of human meaning. What an object or an image means to us, what it brings to our minds, can depend crucially on a slight detail. A generalised image or object, as we place it mentally in a series of possible concrete situations, can mean almost anything, and therefore means, in effect, next to nothing. Plot, in helping establish a concrete human situation,

is important. But plot mustn't dictate meaning if one is to have film poetry: the meaning of an object or an image must still be its own, modified and made unique by plot and structure and point of view, an unexpected facet or latent resonance perhaps emphasised.

In *Nosferatu*, a great film poem, the streets and houses of a town struck by pestilence are made to seem sinister and vertiginous, yet all the while retain their reality as streets and houses, even their ordinariness. For another example take *October*, that mixture of the truly poetic and the aggressively unpoetic. Eisenstein, ridiculing Kerensky, at one point shows him intercut with shots of a bust of Napoleon. It could be almost any bust of Napoleon, seen against a featureless background; it is as much as possible an abstract bust of Napoleon; it carries no meaning beyond the most obvious one, and no poetry at all. Perhaps the effect is similarly crude when, in another scene, Eisenstein cuts back and forth from Kerensky entering the Czar's apartment to a gold peacock that gyrates and displays its feathers, at the top of the door, as the door opens. Yet what we get there is not a generalised but a particular gold peacock gyrating before us, solid and made almost tangible by the sculptural editing technique, its ostentatious motion linked organically to Kerensky going through the door. There Eisenstein at least approaches a genuine poetry of objects.

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*Le Trou* has often been compared with Bresson's *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé*. Superficially there are of course obvious similarities between the two films, both reconstructions of actual laborious attempts to escape from prison. Maybe, as some have argued, the similarities go deeper. But the differences, I think, go deeper still.

It would be wrong to contrast the two films by saying that *Un Condamné à Mort* is allegorical while *Le Trou* is literal and realistic. True, there is in Becker's film none of that sense we get in Bresson's of a foreordained pattern, with the outcome given away already in the title; and there is no music, certainly no Mozart Mass as in Bresson's film, only natural sounds until the credit titles at the end. Nevertheless, at bottom, *Le Trou* is not naturalistic but as metaphorical in many ways as *Un Condamné à Mort*. And more than metaphorical, it is what Bresson's film is not: poetic.

Bresson's allegorical aim, the rigorous order he imposes, requires that his images be stripped of most of their independent life. Each of his shots is a mercilessly empty vessel designed for carrying the pattern and meaning of the whole. In his purity and austerity I see less a search for essentials (or as Susan Sontag wrote, a "discovery of what is necessary") than a wilful retreat into a self-contained, subjective world, in which the Catholic metaphysics he adheres to can apply. Much has been made by critics of the way in which, without recourse to expressionism, Bresson's style transforms ordinary objects. One may admire the beauty and precision of the style. But the drab naturalism of the objects shuns their potential intensity, makes them docile to manipulation; Bresson's alleged real toads are in fact pliable material for the building of his imaginary gardens.†

Fontaine, the *condamné à mort* of Bresson's film, surrenders all to his obsession of escape; and around him things exist only as instruments of his obsession. In *Le Trou* there is a similar bending of things toward an ultimate purpose. Tools are made from parts of an iron bedstead or of a scrapped window-frame; a periscope is made with a toothbrush, an hourglass with two small bottles stolen from the infirmary. And the prisoners display in their escape effort some of Fontaine's ruthless efficiency. "First things first," says Roland, and puts away the pieces of a broken mirror, as it turns out barely in time to escape detection. Later on, when Roland and Manu have made their way to the basement, Roland's making of a passkey is interrupted by guards coming; the two prisoners, one standing on the other's shoulders, hide behind a column and move around it as the guards walk by; and just

\*A real world, I should stress, not *the* real world, to be known, after William Pechter, as the Kracauer Fallacy.

†Eric Rhode makes use of Marianne Moore's phrase in his study of Bresson in *Tower of Babel*.



as soon as the guards are gone, without a second wasted, without Manu or Roland saying anything, we return to a close shot of hands working on the passkey. Roland in particular has much of Fontaine's meticulous zeal.

Yet in Roland this zeal is not simply absorption in a project, but also a matter of personal dignity. He is the leader of the group; has made in the past three successful escape attempts; the others admire him. His perfectionist attention to details is meant to satisfy not only the demands of the project but those he makes of himself. For the others, too—including Geo, who does his share of the work not intending to escape himself—the project takes on a personal significance. Their joint effort is more than the bending of human beings toward an ultimate purpose: it is an assertion of their humanity.

The human beings are not attenuated in *Le Trou*: and neither are the objects. The objects too assert themselves. Perhaps most striking is their proud noise. In no other film—certainly in no other prison-break film, where digging is usually done in convenient near-silence—is the noise of objects so plain and vivid. A cement floor is to be broken through, and the prisoners soon find out that they must hit it hard with a heavy piece of metal; and hitting it hard makes a loud noise. This may bring the guards, but the floor of the prison cell won't give any other way. Filing through an iron bar makes a shrill sound; all Manu and Roland can do is stop every twenty motions and listen for somebody coming. And the sound of objects is only a part of their conveyed sensual presence. Mere rocks and dust, palpable before us in a long-held shot of the hole being dug through the cement floor, come to appear rich and intense. The filing of the iron bar is shot in tight close-ups; of hands and the file cutting through the iron bar, of Manu's or Roland's face when he stops and listens. Becker's camera seeks to rest on, to grasp hold of, solid things, and moves swiftly when it goes from one to another. Objects, bent by the strain put on them, by the special human purpose which they are made to serve, are yet not bent out of shape; bent, they reveal a fresh aspect which is still peculiarly their own. A meaning is not imposed on them from outside: it is rather, poetically, brought out from within.

\* \* \*

*Le Trou* has been justly praised for its affirmation of human dignity, its (as Vernon Young wrote) "reverence for life in a setting constituted for nothing but imminent death." One should also stress its complementary sense of the dignity of things, of their value and service to man, of man's ability to come to terms with them. How remarkable to find, amidst the oppressive circumstances of *Le Trou*, that glorious Mediterranean confidence in the material world, in the possibility of harmony between men and things.

At one point in the film Manu and Roland walk down a dark underground corridor, searching for the door that, from the prison basement, leads to the sewers. First we see a stationary long shot of the two men walking away: they appear as little figures, cramped and forlorn, the ceiling low above their heads, the light that they carry tracing out in the darkness not a path that they could choose but the narrow shape of the corridor. Then we move closer. Manu stops and asks Roland where they are. Roland draws on the dirt-floor a map of the prison, explains where they can expect to find the door (or doors) to the sewers. The prisoners, we discern, know where they stand, they accept as given the cumbrous and restrictive environment and are able manfully to come to terms with it. When they resume walking we follow them in a brief, exhilarating travelling shot; a shot which expresses their resilience, their remarkable control over the situation, their freedom attained in the recognition of necessity.

That is essentially a subjective shot: the camera becomes, as it were, one more of the men. We get a similar—and similarly striking—shot earlier in the film, when the prisoners have finished digging through the floor of their cell. While the digging goes on the camera watches from one side; then we get a shot from above of the dug hole, as a lit piece of cardboard is being dropped through it. But there isn't much time for the prisoners (and for us with them) to relish that downward view of their attained first objective; the hole must be covered up.

There is another hole—or more precisely a tunnel—that the prisoners dig. When they get to the sewers they find the passageway sealed up with hard concrete. Taking advantage of a bend in the sewer, they dig a tunnel through the relatively soft wall and bypass the concrete. This takes several days (or rather nights: the prisoners, two at a time, work during the night). At the point of breakthrough to the other side we get a shot of the hole flat on, reminiscent of the shot, flat on from above, of the earlier hole. Here, however, we see the hole from the other side, taking shape in the wall while the man digging remains in the background, slightly out of focus. The earlier shot was subjective: things seen from the point of view of the men. In this shot we see the men—the human effort—from what could be described as the point of view of things. These two linked shots—linked not only by a geometric similarity but by the sense which they both convey of an attained objective—suggest the complementary nature of these two points of view, their coming together, so to speak, in the shape of the hole.

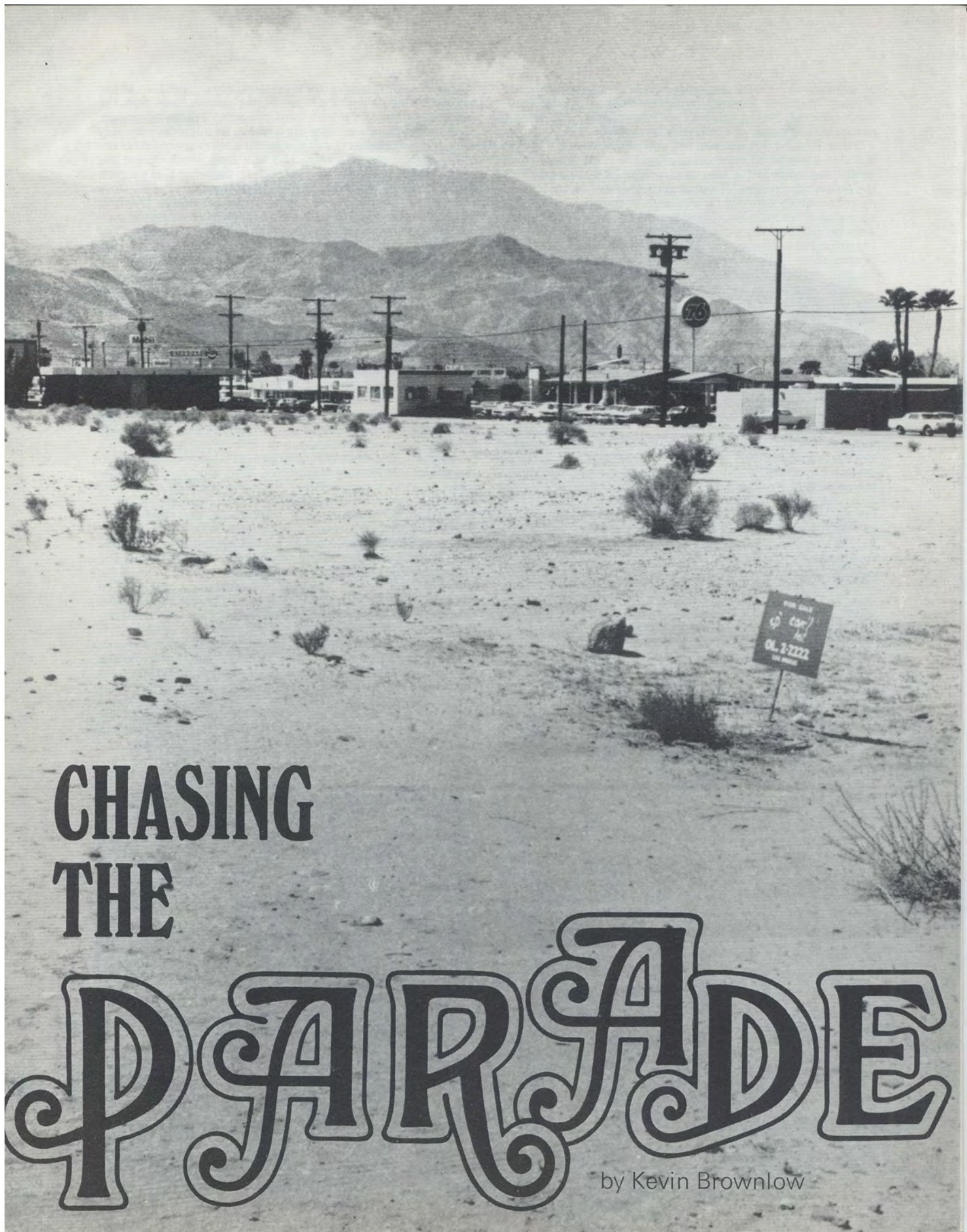
One shot is from inside the prison cell; the other is from the sewers, beyond all obstacles to reaching the street. These are shots of two different holes, at opposite ends of the tortuous escape route. Yet, linked, they seem to be shots of the two ends of one hole. We are thus induced to look upon the entire escape route, upon the two dug holes and everything in between, as one continuous hole. For everything in between is somehow hole-like: the underground corridor, the door to the sewers, the sewers themselves. This long hole could be taken to extend even further: from the peephole in the cell door, through which the prisoners can see outside with their toothbrush periscope, to the manhole in the street which Manu and Gaspard reach and through which they see the prison building, ghostly across a quiet night street. This hole leads out of a massive prison, winding its way along paths and interstices and forcing its way where it must; its shape depends upon and is narrowly determined by the material surroundings, yet serves a special human purpose, and could not have been realised but by human ingenuity and exertion. Men and things come together in the shape of the hole.

At the end, a cruel and arbitrary reversal. From both sides of this hole guards come and overwhelm the prisoners before they can escape. First it is a visual irruption, through the peephole: Geo, keeping watch, suddenly sees in the corridor a large number of guards. Then the cell is invaded both through the door and through the hole in the floor. Guards, one supposes, are all along the escape-hole, to the street. The men have been betrayed; yet not by things, but by Gaspard.

"CASQUE D'OR": MANDA AND MARIE.







# CHASING THE PARADE

by Kevin Brownlow



**I**F YOU WORK in the film industry, you meet American producers—and the chances are high that you'll get an invitation to Hollywood: "If you're ever on the West Coast, you must stay with us in Beverly Hills. We can put you up any time." These invitations are seldom serious; they are presented more as an information service than as an act of friendship. The producer wants you to know that (a) he lives in Beverly Hills, and (b) has a house large enough to accommodate both you and his family.

I received one of these invitations quite early in my career, and it sounded most convincing: "Why, it would be no trouble. We have one of the biggest houses in Beverly Hills. Belonged to an old movie director. We have our own projection suite with control buttons on the armchairs. You'd love it. We can run pictures all night." I got as far as New York before the sad truth crackled down the long-distance wire. "Well, listen, Kevin. I'll tell you the problem. My wife's mother is staying with us . . . why don't you call me next week?"

Hollywood had been my objective since my first interest in silent pictures. I had tried several ways of getting there. I wrote a treatment for a television spectacular about the Golden Days of Hollywood. It got as far as the costing stage, but the TV company procrastinated and David Wolper's excellent *Hollywood—The Golden Years* rendered it obsolete.

The idea of a book about the silent era had occurred to me years before, but I could find no publisher willing to finance it. The idea of a grant from an American Foundation was suggested—but I was told that only American citizens were eligible. So I sank my meagre savings into the project, and got as far as New York. Oscar Lewenstein and Woodfall Films generously provided me with the fare on to California; and all I had to do was to arrange for accommodation.

While waiting for the producer to free himself from his mother-in-law, I tracked down the personalities of the silent era who lived in New York. Most of them were hospitable and helpful, but they were all surprised that someone in his twenties should be so fascinated by their past. "But silent pictures look pretty silly today, don't they?" they would say. The first part of the interview was generally spent restoring their confidence in their work, explaining that silent films were *not* jerky, flickery

and technically incompetent, despite what they may have seen on television. It amazed and saddened me to find that the popular misconceptions had spread even to those who worked in silent pictures. I used to carry a strip of 35 mm. film shot in 1915 and a strip shot in 1963; comparing these under the light provided positive proof of the superb quality of orthochromatic film.

One personality often led straight to another—sometimes by accident. A vivid interview with Enid Markey about her days with Thomas H. Ince took place at the Algonquin hotel; Miss Markey suddenly spotted a friend and called out "Nancy!" And I was introduced to Nancy Carroll who, the following day, gave me a dramatic demonstration of the difference between silent and talking-picture acting.

But there was no freemasonry among silent picture people on the East Coast, and I had many failures. Constance Bennett broke every appointment and left charming notes on whimsically illustrated memo pads. The mat outside the door of her apartment—the sort that usually says Welcome—said Go Away. I expected everyone to have a tinge of *Sunset Boulevard*, so I wasn't perturbed by eccentricity. One actress, however, a blonde beauty of the early Twenties who once headed her own production company, refused point blank to co-operate. "I have never given an interview in my life," she said over the telephone. "People would pay a lot of money for an interview right now." I tried to convince her how important it was to meet her and tape-record her reminiscences. She seemed horrified. "No, definitely not!" she said, adding by way of explanation: "I don't look at all like my pictures. You see, I'm 5 ft. 3, but I look a lot taller on the stage because I have the presence. I look twenty and feel twenty. I still go out with men but I regard myself as 37. I am a very beautiful woman and I don't want to be dated. I would hate it if you wrote the dates in your book. You would wreck me. Just to make your book go well you would wreck me."

But most of the silent stars I talked to had no such peculiarities. Lillian Gish, as fragile and as beautiful as though seen through gauze, talked with sensitivity—and common sense—about her days with Griffith. "Dedicated? I suppose I was—I knew the financial burden he was carrying. The others didn't. But it was a dedicated life then. You had no social life. You had to have lunch or dinner, but it was always spent talking over work—talking over stories or cutting or titles. I don't see how any human being worked the way he did. Never less than eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. They say he saw other people's pictures. He never had the time. If you insisted, he'd borrow a print of *The Last Laugh* and run it at the studio, but that was very rare. He didn't have time to see pictures; he was too busy making them."

Lillian Gish's sister, Dorothy, looked older, but had lost none of her intelligence or wit. I anticipated, perhaps, a pale shadow of Lillian, but Dorothy's humour and energy gave her a strong personality of her own. She also had a charming talent for self-deprecation: "If someone tells me I can't do something, I generally take it on," she said. "I remember what Robert Sherwood said about me in *The Bright Shawl*: 'After seeing Dorothy Gish play La Clavel, I'm sure we'll be seeing Jackie Coogan as Macbeth.'"

Transcribing these and other tapes emphasised the importance of a journey to Hollywood, and I placed another long distance call to my producer friend. But his strained voice indicated that his problems, far from diminishing, had increased. My mental picture of his sprawling mansion dissolved through to an overcrowded beach hut. I didn't bother him any more. A fellow collector, director David Bradley, came to my rescue—offering not only accommodation in Hollywood itself, but a car to solve the major problem of transport.

Hollywood exists, but it is more a generic term than an actual place. When a film man talks about 'Hollywood' he refers to Culver City, Burbank, Glendale and all the other film producing areas of Los Angeles.

I didn't find Los Angeles 'disillusioning', as have so many people: my imaginary picture was based on photographic evidence and was therefore reasonably accurate. Some of it looks like an endless North Circular Road, and there is a general feeling of impermanence, as though a mass of squatters had descended on the city, nailed their names to rapidly constructed shacks, and refused to leave. Brush fires, earth tremors, floods: within my stay, Los Angeles was subjected to them all. The scale of the place—houses, studios—was rather smaller than I had anticipated, although the streets go on interminably. The tree-covered residential backwaters are both relaxing and, to a European, very attractive; single-storey wooden bungalows, with beautifully kept gardens set in quiet streets . . . here was where I discovered most of the retired stars and technicians.

The Street of the Stars is a pavement literally studded with stars; upon each brass star is a symbol—a camera or a microphone—and a name. I found myself skirting such hallowed names as Lillian Gish and Lon Chaney, but I got a vicarious thrill from stamping on those of certain producers. Why they were represented on the Street of the Stars, I can't think—Chaplin isn't. But in Hollywood, the manufacturers of grade-zero quickies co-exist with the Viders, Fords and Wylers. Like manufacturers in a factory town, your goods may be cheap and shoddy, but if they're serviceable they sell—and you thus contribute to the general welfare of the

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*Kevin Brownlow's book on Hollywood before sound, The Parade's Gone By, is reviewed in this issue by Rodney Ackland. In this article, Kevin Brownlow writes about his experiences while looking for Hollywood's silent past. The photographs were taken by Mr. Brownlow in California earlier this year.*



town. Whenever I deprecated the work of these men I was sternly rapped on the knuckles: "There is still something honourable about them. Their work provides employment, doesn't it? It gets a release, doesn't it?" The theme of providing employment was frequently used when justifying the ubiquity of television. The great cameraman Hal Rosson told me he would never work in TV, but he recognised that it had saved the town from extinction.

At Fox studios, Western Avenue, production was at that time geared almost exclusively to TV films. The big stages had once been used by J. Gordon Edwards and Raoul Walsh; when Fox took up Movietone, they lined the walls with mattresses—ordinary mattresses—as sound-proofing. They are still there.

*Twelve O'Clock High*, the TV series inspired by the Henry King picture, was in production, and it was enlightening to see Hollywood's idea of wartime



MINTA DURFEE ARBUCKLE, WIDOW OF COMEDIAN ROSCOE ('FATTY') ARBUCKLE.

Britain. Once, Hollywood produced the best English pictures in the world (*David Copperfield*, *Treasure Island*); but accuracy requires good art direction and first-class technical men, and television can spare neither the time nor the money. The result was Archbury Street, somewhere in England. There was an English car, some English posters . . . The Archbury Cinema announced *The Mark of Zorro* with Tyrone Power and Linda Darnell. But the sidewalks were too high to be called pavements and a police box was placed in a position of honour beneath an arch, as though it was something precious to our culture. And there was a very odd, very large green box on a stand, looking like an Emmett fire alarm. "What's that?" I asked our official police escort. "Why, that's an original English mailbox."

A director with a German accent was shooting a scene with a great deal of camera movement: "Let's get married! None of your Nos!" "Have you got leave?" "I took leave. I'm going out into the wide civilian world." "What about your self-respect?" "Don't you understand, honey? I've had enough. I can't take it. I'm washed up. I'm through with the Air Force!"

"Cut! Perfekt! Print!" called the director.

The technicians were middle-aged and old men, very friendly; some were asleep on their stomachs. A notice pinned to the door was addressed To All Employees: "It's all right to start the day with tea. A coffee break's okay at 10.00. A drop of Scotch mid-morning. Some Coke before lunch. Beer with the meal. Coffee in the afternoon. BUT THIS SIP, SIP, SIP ALL DAY HAS GOT TO STOP!"

Apart from the studios and the Street of the Stars, there is little to suggest a film-producing centre. An eye accustomed to American movies will react nostalgically to the familiar bungalows, lamp-posts, streetcar rails and telegraph poles. Otherwise the only memories are evoked by the Keystone Dry Cleaners, near what was once Mack Sennett's headquarters, the Old Time Movie Theatre on North Fairfax . . . and the reminiscences of the older generation.

The friendliness of Californians is a cheering contrast to the often open hostility of the East. However, it can be carried to extremes, and in restaurants it frequently is. Here, waitresses are called hostesses, and you are handed a slip like a preview form: Service satisfactory? Could be improved? Only fair? And the hostess greets you with chilling effusiveness: "Hello. My name is Tilly and I'm your waitress for this evening. Is there anything you'd like before you order?"

I visited Pickfair, the name given by the press to the home of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, and Greenacres, Harold Lloyd's mansion. These are the last great homes in the possession of their original owners. Pickfair had reduced its grounds, but the place was still highly impressive. Nevertheless, I was disappointed to find so little reference to motion pictures; apart from a still of Mary Pickford and her husband Buddy Rogers in *My Best Girl*, there was no indication whatever of Mary Pickford's career.

Greenacres is vast; one day it will be presented to the people of Beverly Hills. Harold Lloyd showed me his Christmas tree, which had taken ten days to erect. Bamboo poles supported the branches, which were laden with presents and decorations, some covered with costume jewellery, others with tiny figures wearing Harold Lloyd glasses. They had been sent by admirers from all over the world. Underneath the tree was a model village; the whole thing was illuminated with photofloods.



HAROLD LLOYD WITH CHRISTMAS TREE.

Lloyd led me into another room, packed with speakers, amplifiers and turntables. In an ante-room, approached through a sliding panel, were shelves stacked with record albums; Lloyd added a new release as it was issued. He demonstrated his sound system, and the fidelity surpassed anything I have heard before or since. "It takes three people to carry in each of those bass speakers," he said. "I might come into this room at 10.30 after a tiring day—and I'll listen to music and be sorry to go to bed at 2 a.m." His passion was Beethoven, and his library catalogue had many closely typed pages under that one entry. Besides his enthusiasm for hi-fi, Lloyd was an expert photographer, and showed me some of the stereo work which had brought him national awards.

Underneath the lawn was a long corridor, lined with signed photographs: from John Barrymore, 'one of your most ardent fans'; a sombre picture of Chaplin with just a signature; a picture of Capra, 'to Harold, who started most of us gag men'; and a message from Cecil B. De Mille: 'I hope that the public will never find my spectacles as funny as they find yours.' And, at the end of the corridor, a movie theatre. "Shall we have some lunch and see some pictures?" asked Lloyd. I had to take a deep breath and say no: in half an hour I had an appointment with Francis X. Bushman.

I could have postponed the interview with Bushman, but experience had taught me that this was fatal. A postponed interview too often becomes a forgotten interview. (In fact, Bushman died eighteen months later.) At this time, he was running with his wife an antique and curio shop called Remember When? I was astonished to see the winged helmet he wore as Messala in *Ben-Hur* (1926) lying on the table just inside the door. It was, unhappily, not for sale. I picked it up covetously and discovered that it had been made from a German pickelhaube—the spiked helmet of the First World War.

"That's right," said Bushman. "The armour and all the metal stuff for *Ben-Hur* was made by Hermann J. Kaufmann, in Berlin. They did an excellent job, because it was heavy stuff and when I was out in the Italian sun, I'm telling you I *roasted*." Bushman recalled the ludicrous and tragic events



that led to the *Ben-Hur* company being brought home from location in Italy. His career was given a lift by *Ben-Hur*; shortly afterwards he was blacklisted by Louis B. Mayer. "What I went through in my career! No one would believe me. But sixty-eight years in show business, and a lot of things happen. Dead yesterday and unborn tomorrow, that's me."

The following night, I was told, there was a meeting at the Masquers Club at which several silent stars would be present. It was a difficult situation: the club was full of members, any one of whom could have been an old movie star. There was Alan Mowbray—"How is Hampstead Heath? The last time I saw it was under canvas, in 1918..."—Vivian Duncan, one of the famous Duncan sisters, and many old theatre and vaudeville players. But I couldn't spot Laura La Plante or Viola Dana, who were supposed to be there. Eventually, I was trapped by a lady who, far from being a once-great actress, was currently marketing a new kind of lamp. She supplied an interminable commercial.

Taking refuge in a corner, I found myself sitting next to Francis McDonald, supporting actor in hundreds of silent pictures. He was a tough man to talk to, very different from the smooth Frenchman he so often portrayed. He wouldn't let me record his conversation; he said his agent wouldn't allow it. He also said that he was leaving in a moment—but stayed for more than an hour while I struggled to write down everything he said.

"I worked with Bill Wellman on *Legion of the Condemned*. Wellman found an army man, Lieutenant Robby Robinson, who resigned his rank and helped on all the air pictures. He flew the D8s and Nieuports from the back. We sat out front playing the pilots, but he said, 'If you touch the stick, you bastards, I'll kill you.' So he sat back there with a club out of sight. The cameras were bolted on the planes and



IRVIN WILLAT, DIRECTOR FROM THE DAYS OF THOMAS INCE, IN FRONT OF THE STUDIO BUILT FOR HIM IN THE TWENTIES. THE STUDIO IS NOW A PRIVATE HOUSE.

we went up and did our stuff. Three boys were killed on that film. Two Nieuports spun in... they took 'em up too cold. Those engines have to be revved. Wellman, of course, had spun in during the war and had a plate in his head to prove it."

In the lobby were pictures of past presidents of the Masquers Club, and sitting on a couch nearby was an intriguing looking woman in her sixties. I was convinced that *she* had been in silent pictures, so I began a conversation with a mention of Fred Niblo, whose picture was just above her head.

"Oh, yes—he was married to..." She couldn't remember.

"Enid Bennett."

"Oh, yes—but you don't remember..."

"No, but I'm very interested in this period. Particularly in directors."

"Well, my husband was a director."

"Really? What is his name?"

"Oh, you wouldn't have heard of him. Joseph Henabery."

"Joseph Henabery!" I sat down heavily on the arm of a chair. "I've not only heard of him, I have prints of some of his pictures."

We arranged to drive out to the Henaberys' Tarzana home at the weekend. California was having its worst flooding for ten years: torrents of water poured down the side streets, and

cars sent up bow waves. We were late, but Joseph Henabery was warm and welcoming. He was a fervent admirer of D. W. Griffith, whom he closely resembled. He had an amazing recall of events which had taken place fifty years before, and he talked solidly and grippingly for four hours, while Mrs. Henabery fed us coffee, beer and toasted cheese sandwiches. I began to think that California's old advertising claims of 'a paradise on earth' had some foundation...

At David Bradley's house, I was living in a day-dream, staring at the Los Angeles Wilshire district spread below me, and able to pick up a telephone and contact anyone I wanted. There was only one difference between the dream and reality—the Los Angeles telephone directory listed practically no celebrities, past or present.

I was determined to meet Buster Keaton. The problem was how to get his unlisted number. I managed to find the name of his agent, and called his office. He'd left, but the switchboard



FRANCES MARION, SILENT SCENARIST WHO WROTE "STELLA DALLAS", "THE SCARLET LETTER", "THE WIND".

girl gave me his home number. I called his home—and he hadn't arrived. I explained to his wife why I was anxious to meet Keaton: she seemed to understand, but hinted at a problem. I gave her my number and was about to launch into some more propaganda when she said, "Oh, I hear his car. Don't go away." I heard the sound effects of the front door opening and the wife's voice. There was a very long pause. Eventually, I heard footsteps. The receiver was picked up; another long pause. Evidently, the agent wasn't finding the decision easy. Finally, I heard what sounded like a sigh of resignation. "I'll give you the number," said a man's voice. "But don't tell him who gave it to you." He rattled off the number and replaced the receiver.

Was Keaton hard to get along with—or was the agent merely being melodramatic? I dialled the number nervously. A deep gravelly voice answered. Imagining that Keaton spoke with a hardly audible whisper, I didn't realise at first who I was speaking to. By the time I had explained what I wanted, I found myself speaking to Mrs. Keaton. To my surprise, she fixed an appoint-

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, 1969: HORSES ON CALL FOR A WESTERN.





ment at once—and even took the trouble to give details of the quickest route to the Keaton home.

The house in the San Fernando Valley was called The Keatons; it was pleasant enough, but scarcely comparable with his former residence. Mrs. Keaton opened the door and before I could enter, the gap was filled by a colossal St. Bernard. Grinning, Mrs. Keaton tried to keep the door open, drag the dog in and shake hands all at once. From the next room, thundering hoofs and gunshots came from a television set. "Buster!" called Mrs. Keaton. The noise stopped abruptly. "The studio put Buster on standby today," she told me. "If I'd had some place to call you, I'd have cancelled the visit. But they aren't shooting after all." I congratulated myself on my foresight in not leaving a number.

Buster Keaton emerged from the next room, in his shirtsleeves. He looked a lot younger than the current photographs I'd seen—and he laughed. That was the last thing I expected from the deadpan comedian. But several times during the interview, a suddenly remembered funny incident would be accompanied by an infectious, spontaneous laugh of genuine amusement.



DIRECTOR CLARENCE BROWN.

Keaton talked about his silent pictures, about his mentor, Roscoe Arbuckle, and he described with especial enthusiasm the mechanics of gags. "The difference between a pratfall and a One-oh-Eight? The 108 was invented by Ben Turpin. In other words, however he fell—a walkover frontwards, a layout, a spreadeagle flat—that was his 108. So anytime a director says 'Hey, you come through here, Ben—take a fall.' He says, 'Which you want? Hundred and eight, fifty-two or one of the small ones like seven?' 'No, do a hundred and eight.' He'd do a regular straight pratfall. It would have no number. Anytime anyone took a wild fall, he always called it a 108."

At that moment Mrs. Keaton came into the room.

"Mademoiselle!" exclaimed Keaton, pleased to see her.

"You didn't feed the girls," said Mrs. Keaton, referring to the chickens.

"Yeah, I did it just a minute ago," said Keaton. "I was about forty-five



ENID BENNETT, STAR OF "ROBIN HOOD", WITH HER HUSBAND SIDNEY FRANKLIN.

minutes late and they were all standing at the gate, stamping their feet at me." And Keaton did an imitation of a seething chicken, tapping his foot and scowling.

Contacting Keaton had suggested difficulties; the Screen Directors' Guild presented them. "We're sorry, no addresses," they said. "We will pass your enquiry to our members, but I'm afraid we can't do more." Fortunately, David Bradley was a member, and he pulled the right strings. The first director I located was Sidney Franklin. His was a name which had always fascinated me. With his brother Chester, Franklin had started with Griffith in 1914, moved to Fox in 1917 and made a series of children's pictures which, when seen today, seem remarkably imaginative and exceptionally funny. I had found several of these, together with some of the Norma Talmadge pictures which Sidney Franklin had made on his own. And, of course, I had seen his more famous films of the Thirties, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* and *The Good Earth*.

When I called him, a deep, rather English voice answered the 'phone. I asked if he would be free for an interview. "I'm not very keen to do this . . . so many times what is written is inaccurate. I never give interviews or anything like that . . ." I emphasised the importance I placed upon accuracy, and told him that I had been collecting Sidney Franklin pictures since the age of fourteen. His attitude began to change: reluctantly he arranged a date. This reluctance was still noticeable as we began the interview. He was a slightly built, grey-haired man with the moustache he had worn since his Triangle days; for some reason, this made him look English. He also wore a dark blue jacket and white trousers, which made

him resemble a cricket blue. Franklin's early fascination for England, reflected in many of his films, took a beating when he came to work in London, and he confessed that some of his romantic illusions had been sadly dispelled.

At first, he talked with his eyebrows raised, as though full of disdain, but he would unexpectedly break into a wide, mischievous grin. He would begin a tantalising story, then stop and say, confidently, "That's for my book." I would try another question. A short pause and he would provide an answer. But just as it became interesting he would break off: "Now, tell me about yourself." I gradually eroded his resistance by describing his films to him. "I didn't know I was that darn good," he grinned. The atmosphere gradually became warmer and the reminiscences livelier.

"On *Intolerance* there were a thousand idiots on top of the walls of Babylon throwing down burning oil and big rocks made of plaster of Paris. Well, if one of them hit you, it could kill you. They were dropping so many things that no one could get the extras up to the walls. I was in charge of a group of 500, and Christy Cabanne had another group of 500. And since I was out in front, I made a speech. You know, a big rousing speech—'Come on boys, don't be afraid to approach the walls—follow me!' I charged toward the walls, thinking and hoping they'd all follow me. It took a lot of courage. 'Follow me!'—and I'd no sooner got the words out of my mouth than a rock came hurtling from fifty feet up and struck my shield. The shield knocked me cold and my 500 extras went the other way. My mother came across to the studio and said, 'Is my son in there?' 'Yes,' they told her. 'His brains are all over the lot.'"

Towards the end of the morning, Sidney Franklin called his wife. And down the Georgian staircase came a remarkably beautiful woman with a very familiar face—Enid Bennett, star of *Robin Hood*. The widow of Fred Niblo (he made *Ben-Hur*), she had recently married Sidney Franklin.

However elusive, however reluctant to talk, these great names of Hollywood displayed astonishing friendliness and cooperation once the barriers were overcome. And they all proved remarkable people. Some were in their seventies, some well over eighty, yet none were senile—none were even old, in the usual sense. For old age generally causes people to retire from life. This was true of no one I met. They were nearly all active, either in the film industry, or in writing or painting. And the sense of exhilaration they communicated made me realise why the Twenties was such an astonishing era—when they were young and making pictures.



# FILM REVIEWS

## BAISERS VOLES

THOSE WHO DON'T CARE for Truffaut's films usually complain that there are no really horrible people in them. It's possible that Truffaut has an abnormal capacity to forgive, and that he is not much interested in blame, and this may be what they mean. He is certainly more concerned with what is than with what should be. To be anything else, in his films, is self-indulgent and a waste of time.

There's a neat example of that near the beginning of *Baisers Volés* (United Artists). Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud), the boy hero of *Les quatre cents coups*, now a young man, has just been discharged from the army. He jumps off a bus and runs headlong across a busy square and down a side street. Home, at last, to mother? To his girl friend? By no means. The rush is to get to a brothel. The first girl he goes up with won't be kissed on the mouth (*pas avec les clients*), won't let him muss her lacquered hair, and won't undress. He pays and leaves silently without touching her. He's not in that much of a hurry. There's no hint of recrimination, it's just that she's very bad at her job. At the foot of the stairs he meets a redhead who seems a better deal. He turns round and comes back up to her cheery invitation—"you'll be my first soldier today."

By a typical irony of course he is in fact a soldier no longer. But the mistakes people make in weighing each other up are just as much a part of the subject. As always with Truffaut the real enemy is the Institution, which formalises and distorts human relationships. The most vicious remark comes from Doinel's commanding officer: "I hope we never meet again," he tells the boy. He could have said nothing worse, for Truffaut's films celebrate the beauty of chance and coincidence. At the end of the film Antoine crashes his TV-repair van incompetently into a car driven by the father of his estranged girl friend. The young couple meet again and this time they meet for good (although you can never be sure, as the film's last scene reminds us). The reason why the army—or any other institution like it—is the enemy, is that it allows no possibility for the wayward or the exceptional in human affairs, and basic to

it is the proposition that all men are the same, or must be made so. But *Baisers Volés* proposes that all men are unique and exceptional and that our differences shouldn't be a cause of fear and mistrust but rather of pleasure.

The differences and the similarities—what unites us and what separates us. It sounds like a pretty good invitation to slush. But though Truffaut may present life, for some tastes, as optimistically fruitful, he has taken nothing for granted on the way. There is no sleight of hand and nothing missing.

Antoine visits the home of his former girl friend Christine. Her parents welcome him and fix him up with a job. It's a banal enough meeting but it's crammed with detail. Antoine is warm but reserved, disappointed not to see Christine, who's out, embarrassed by their kindness. They are equally warm, but reticent too, since they know that Christine is avoiding him. Though he has clearly had an unhappy time, they are anxious to preserve his independence, aware of his need to tell them about the army and equally of his need to keep silent. Not being perfect they don't manage this balancing act with total success, but in the way in which they perty, covertly or self-indulgently impose the restraints of delicacy on each other we can read, in a few moments, an account of their marriage. It is an open question whether Antoine's marriage will be like this one or like his own parents', of whom we hear nothing.

This wholeness, or integrity, can be established or destroyed by the smallest details. Out of gullibility Antoine loses the job they get him as a hotel night clerk, allowing a canny old private eye to bluff his way into an adulterous bedroom. But it is the investigator, M. Henri, who, by way of compensation, takes Antoine on and teaches him the detective business. In a taxi speeding across Paris M. Henri points out of the window. "Over there you can get very good salt pork and lentils." The comic detail—this is one of Truffaut's funniest

films—is serviceable, for it calls not only on the idea of apprenticeship, but also of tradition and affection and the place they play in it. We may remember the old man in the hut by the water's edge in *Fahrenheit 451*, lying on his death bed, teaching a boy to take on the life of *Weir of Hermiston*. By dozens of such tiny clues the larger theme emerges: the circle of life involves death, just as the night's tragedy can turn into farce by the morning.

M. Henri and Antoine pursue their inquiries to a fluttering of closing doors. With each new door that closes in his face Antoine learns a little more of his trade. But at the end of the sequence comes the door that's nearest his heart—Christine's. As her mother opens the front door to let Antoine in, the side door opens too, to let Christine out.

At the best moments these contradictory elements flow together in unforced concentration. M. Henri is on the Agency 'phone impersonating someone inquiring about the private life of a young woman teacher. To his right the door of the washroom lies open. The entire staff seems to be going in and out of it. Antoine's other male colleague is being rejected again by the senior woman investigator, while she, with little tact, tries on a new wig in the mirror, admired by the cool, efficient and possibly lesbian junior. Antoine sweeps in, desperate and elated, having just been seduced by the beautiful wife of the client whose lugubrious suspicions of betrayal he has been hired to investigate. There is the sense of a world in chaos, in helpless pursuit of passion. Without warning the receiver drops from the old man's hands and he falls dead at their feet. After the funeral we can guess what Antoine's first duty will be. He picks up a street girl and climbs upstairs, mindful of the advice of his office pal. "To make love is a way of compensating for death... it's a way of proving you exist."

Such things need affirming. Chance is so chancy. Who would have believed that the old man who lost you your job would get you another? Who would believe that you

"BAISERS VOLES": DELPHINE SEYRIG AND JEAN-PIERRE LEAUD.



SK-6



could track a man down to a post office and while your eyes never left the doorway a lorry could draw across it and your man slip away? Life and its objects interfere with your plans for them. Only when Antoine sends the wife, Fabienne, a *pneumatique* which brings her to his room in the morning are objects on his side. We watch fascinated as underground pipes whisk the message across Paris, and Fabienne and Antoine, so unimaginably separated, are united. Who would have believed that?

What unites us and what separates us. If we can defend Truffaut against the charge of sentimentality it will not be for any revolutionary play with the old humanist themes. On the contrary it must be because of the respect he has for our differences, and for the beauty with which he describes our similarities. When Fabienne decides to contact Antoine she looks up his address and memorises it with silently moving lips and closed eyes. When the director of the Agency tells a homosexual client the new address of the lover who has left him the man makes an identical gesture, leaning back in his chair with relief and gratitude, eyes closed, lips moving to print the letters on his brain.

But even that won't work. The lover has taken a wife. Nothing is permanent but death. At the end Antoine gets his Christine at last, and while they sit in the park making plans a pale and serious stranger approaches. He has followed Christine for months, like a detective, but more like a lover. He makes a declaration of passion. I hate the temporary, he tells her. She must eventually shed such attachments and join him, for ever. He strides away. "He's absolutely mad," Christine tells Antoine, but Antoine knows better. "Oh, oui, surement," he answers, but without much conviction, for by now he knows that while you can be certain that everything will change, you can only hope that things will always be the same. This beautifully conceived and brilliantly acted film confirms Truffaut's high place in the French humanist tradition. He can stand the comparison with Renoir.

GAVIN MILLAR

## SIMON OF THE DESERT

AFTER SIX YEARS atop a pillar in the desert, justifying the ways of men to God, Simon is offered a perch still higher above the worldliness of his flock by a rich convert. But even the few hundred yards between pillars prove fraught with temptation. He shrinks with terrified humility from the threat of ordination as a priest and steadfastly refuses the embrace of his mother, who has faithfully taken up residence at the foot of her son's shrine. With relief, he mounts the new column and promptly procures a miraculous pair of hands for a repentant thief, who had been punished by amputation. As the recipient casually belts his wife and the crowds disperse, Simon settles down to his interrupted intercession with the Almighty.

Like its opening sequence, *Simon of the Desert* (Hunter) may appear something of a distraction—not exactly a damp squib, but little more than a delayed firework. Made in 1965, with many of Buñuel's familiar—and undervalued—Mexican collaborators (Claudio Brook as Simon, Silvia Pinal as the versatile Devil, Jesus Fernandez as the



"SIMON OF THE DESERT": THE DEVIL (SILVIA PINAL) AS GOOD SHEPHERD

dwarf goatherd, and photography by Gabriel Figueroa), it stands provocatively between the more impressive achievements of *Journal d'une Femme de Chambre* and *Belle de Jour*: the last of the Mexican quickies and a mere forty-five minutes long. Which last has, presumably, denied it a commercial showing until now. Critics, on the whole, have been wary, confining themselves to regret at the 'embarrassingly crude' ending (where Simon is abruptly transported by jet to a contemporary corner of hell in a seething Gotham city discothèque), or to admiration, in terms of 'Buñuel has done it again'. But what exactly has he done?

Despite the occasional echo of drums from *Nazarin*, and considerable fun at the expense of the monks who service Simon, it would be a mistake to dismiss *Simon* as yet another anti-clerical romp from the old blasphemer ('I'm still an atheist, thank God'). Better instead to recall Buñuel's lifelong commitment to surrealism: "It was surrealism which revealed to me that there is a moral purpose in life which man cannot avoid accepting. Through it, I discovered for the first time that man was not free. I believed in the total freedom of mankind,

but I saw in surrealism a discipline to follow." Still following that discipline, he has created a serious—though never solemn—parable about the chains men forge to bind themselves.

Realising that 'absolute' Christianity cannot survive in the ordinary world, Simon retreats to his pedestal and takes on the absurd task of total expiation through penance. In doing so, he has enslaved his mother (about whom he has fantasies) and provoked unbearable tensions among the monks, so that one is driven to trying to discredit him and goes mad in the face of Simon's impassive refusal to accuse him. Indeed, Simon is not unaware of the demands he is making, as when he dismisses the youngest monk, telling him to return when his beard has grown. But, ironically, the more he cuts himself off from human society and denies his own body, the less he is able to fulfil his chosen task and to resist the revolt of his own mind.

When the Devil first appears as a school-girl, flashing suspenders and playfully jabbing him with a knife, before scuttling off as a naked old woman, he can only pray and cut down on food. Later, when she appears as a pantomime Good Shepherd,



he is almost taken in; and when the disguise is dropped, he can only resort to further mortification—by standing on one leg. Finally, reduced to a near-statue on his platform, he is powerless to resist the 'temptation' of death—in the shape of a self-propelled coffin hurtling across the desert—and is whisked from a solitary to a Sartrean hell.

Like Sartre in *Huis Clos*, Buñuel is concerned with the hell that people create not only for themselves, but for others. As a surrealist, he plunders literal reality (not 'realism') for its surreal poetry. Simon forgetting the end of an interminable prayer, denouncing cleanliness, blessing flies and crumbs—these are all more than easy gags: they show the head-on collision between an irrational logic and mundane rationality. The result is almost continuously humorous; but it is an authentic surrealist humour. As with his first essay, *Un Chien Andalou*, Buñuel's surrealist hagiography must run the risk of its audiences' unlimited capacity for flattering themselves at their own sophistication.

IAN LESLIE CHRISTIE

## THE GURU

IN THE GURU (Fox) the firm of Merchant and Ivory continue their wryly affectionate survey of India after the Raj. As in *The Householder* and *Shakespeare Wallah*, it is the impact of the West on India and, to a lesser extent, the same process in reverse, which chiefly interests them. This time, with the backing of 20th Century-Fox, they are presumably aiming at a world market and have accepted the formula that this involves—wide screen, colour, and star names. None of these is necessarily an advantage to Ivory's small-scale, reticent talent. Colour, it is true, enables him to present the crumbling majesty of Benaras and the richness of Indian decoration more effectively, but the inescapable blue haze of the De Luxe process perhaps does them less than justice. The star, Rita Tushingham, is also a liability rather than an asset, not through any fault of her own, but simply because she is miscast. There is inevitably some loss of the idiosyncratic novelty of the earlier films, but the essential and personal flavour has been successfully transferred to a new environment.

Tom Pickle (Michael York) is a famous English pop singer who has come to India to learn the sitar from a distinguished Indian musician, Ustad Zafar Khan (Utpal Dutt), but he refuses to accept the disciple-guru relationship which the Ustad expects. Instead of moving into his teacher's household and obeying his lightest whim, Tom continues to live in a hotel and maintain his own circle of friends. There is deep mutual respect between the two musicians, but their friendship is in constant danger of disruption because each is incapable of understanding the other's point of view.

That is really all there is to the plot—a series of quarrels and reconciliations, with the Ustad's young English disciple Jenny and his two wives contributing a background of domestic rivalry. Tom's stubborn refusal to treat his guru with the conventional deference could well have seemed graceless, but Michael York makes him an attractive and perceptive young Cockney whose obstinacy is an expression of genuine independence. Moreover, he is really interested in Indian music and as attracted

by some aspects of the country as he is repelled by others. When his London manager (a nice comic cameo by Barry Foster) tries to persuade him to return home, he only strengthens Tom's determination to learn more. But the central character naturally is the guru himself, and it is here that Ivory and his leading actor have brought off a brilliantly funny and touching character study.

A figure of immense dignity and beauty, Utpal Dutt's appearance alone commands respect. But he is slowly taken apart and the hollowness of his pretensions exposed with relentless good humour until, in a delightful scene with his own guru, he is reprimanded like a naughty child for degrading his music by teaching mere tricks to a Western upstart. The process is a slow and subtle one—Ivory lets his jokes develop at their own leisurely pace—but the comment is none the less valid because it is unstressed and amused. There is a party scene in which the smart set of Bombay meet to listen to the latest Western pop, sip drugged drinks and exchange trendy conversation. "Do you dig his sound?" says an earnest young Indian to Miss Tushingham, while a slightly inebriated young woman begs Tom to sing his hit song, 'Ash in my cup of tea'.

The Indians are not the only objects of Ivory's rueful gaze, however. Jenny, with her vague search for nothing in particular and her childish crush on the Ustad, is every bit as absurd as any of the Asians. Interesting, too, to note the unspoken comment on attitudes to women. The two English youngsters have a casual relationship in which sex seems almost incidental, while the Indian wives live in a state of almost slavish submission, the only 'emancipated' Indian woman being an unnaturally aggressive journalist. But Ivory's criticism is never cruel—all his people are basically well-meaning, whatever their faults.

Perhaps his detached and mildly ironic method is best illustrated by two tiny scenes. In one Tom and Jenny are rowing on the Ganges when a boatload of Western hippies passes slowly by. Long-haired, bearded, white-robed like so many caricature Christs, they drift silent and motionless with the tide. The camera dwells for an enquiring moment on the tiny baby held by a girl among them. Nobody speaks. In the second, the Ustad is taking Tom to visit his own venerated guru and has dressed in his most splendid scarlet robe. The thin, shrivelled old man sits cross-legged in an almost empty room in a decaying palace wrapped in a shabby grey pullover and puffing moodily at his hubble-bubble. He treats his visitors with the utmost scorn and is more interested in grumbling about his pension than in anything they have to say. The contrast between the real and the meretricious could not be more clearly stated.

BRENDA DAVIES

## THE FIXER

SHOT IN JANCISO territory, with a largely Hungarian technical unit and even with one or two refugees from *The Round-Up* among the extras, John Frankenheimer's *The Fixer* (M-G-M) represents an abrupt change in gear from the high jinks of *Grand Prix*. The split-screen experiments and staccato cutting have been abandoned in favour of a formal, almost neutral style;

apart from a few moments of hysteria with the camera—for the rather too conventional chaos of a cavalry attack (all whistling swords, overturned bales, and fleeing civilians) and for the brief, diverting snatches of insanity in the prison—the film sits back and observes its characters with simple, static and unobtrusive efficiency.

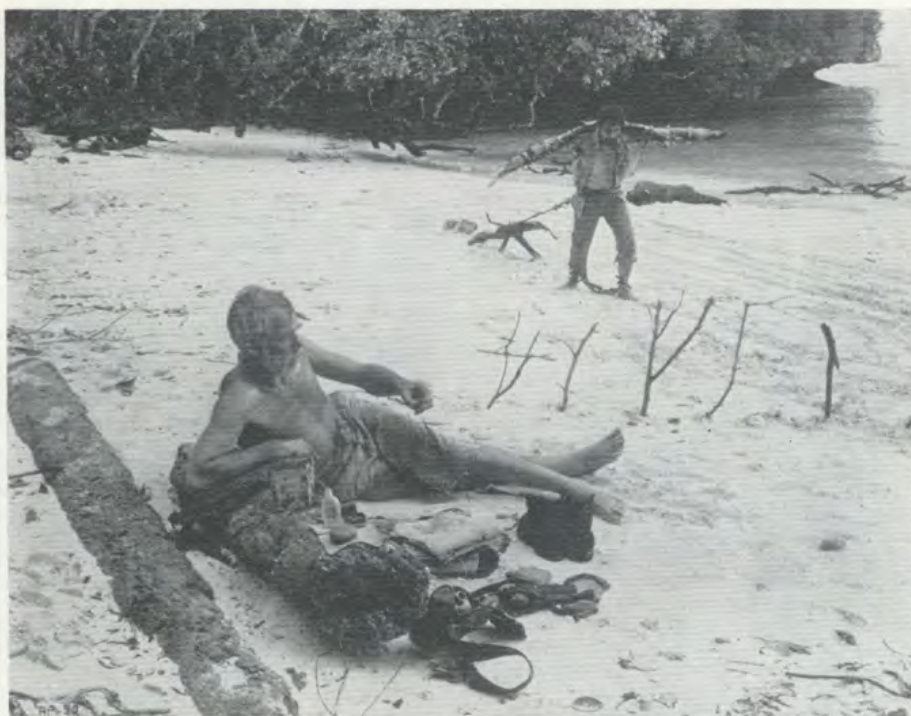
The discipline, if disappointingly reserved after what we have come prematurely to expect from Frankenheimer's flash-bang reputation, is given the fullest justification; Dalton Trumbo's talkative script, based on the Bernard Malamud novel, carries its own stock of fireworks. It deals with a young Jewish peasant in Tsarist Russia who makes for the big city after being deserted by his wife and is quickly caught up in unreasoning tides of persecution and prejudice that sweep him into prison. Although a man aggressively lacking in political affiliation, he discovers during the long brutal months of his imprisonment that his outraged refusal to confess to a crime he did not commit is the cause of surprisingly painful embarrassment to the Government. This realisation of his personal significance leads eventually to a degree of tough sophistication which is more than a match for his persecutors. The film stops short of the October Revolution itself (perhaps because the invasion of Czechoslovakia took place during the shooting), but the Tsarist system is clearly crumbling as the Jew rejects a phoney pardon and makes it to the courtroom steps.

Echoes here of the tireless Stroud in *Bird Man of Alcatraz*, persevering in his scientific research despite the petty obstructions of the bureaucratic penal system, or again of the struggles for righteous power in *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May*. Frankenheimer appears to have come fully into the open as underdog champion, using a handbook of clean-hewed phrases from Spinoza, the McCarthy trials, and the human rights movement—'Respect is what you have to have in order to get,' 'I'm not a hero, I'm an accident,' 'It's not madness but conscience that turns the world upside down,' 'Where there's no fight for it, there's no freedom,' and that essential moment in which a heap of old clothes croaks 'I'm a man.'

Fortunately, *The Fixer* also ventures across wider territories, the most definable being a discreet religious parallel as its Jewish hero proceeds to martyrdom through carpentry. His slow understanding of human unity, while possibly more egocentric than public-spirited, comes to him irresistibly as a profound truth that has been obscenely defaced. On the other hand, Yakov Bok also personifies physical and social impotence, through his inability to give his wife a child, his sudden retreat from the bed of his hostess, and his passive submission to the indignities performed upon him by his gaolers. Non-productive in every sense—one brief sequence even shows him unable to find employment as a handyman anywhere in Kiev—he is easily enough spared by society to be at the same time its scapegoat and its Messiah. The implication has an abrasive irony; although crowds of ill-dressed supporters turn up dutifully at the trial (a splendid shot, by the way, with the prisoner sitting interminably in the small grey cell of his trundling carriage that suddenly opens into blinding daylight), one cannot help but wonder whether they really know why they are there.

And a weakness of *The Fixer* is that much the same could be asked about its cast, an





MARVIN AND MIFUNE IN "HELL IN THE PACIFIC".

incongruous array of British talent ranging from Dirk Bogarde (having a fine old time as the moist-eyed lawyer, pince-nez and all, briskly converted to his client's cause) to such accustomed jailbirds as David Lodge and Danny Green. The singularly unfortunate Georgia Brown sequence is a plain enough example of stops-out melodrama, but David Warner and Ian Holm show similar signs of having been left a little too much to their own devices, while both Carol White and Elizabeth Hartman have surely been hopelessly miscast. The big exception is Alan Bates, who despite the uneasy shifts in mood from comedy to horror, gives an extraordinarily thorough performance as the tormented Jew. If Frankenheimer occasionally shows uncharacteristic signs of letting the story ride along as best it can, Bates ensures that it never loses its force.

PHILIP STRICK

## HELL IN THE PACIFIC

EVIDENTLY JOHN BOORMAN was not responsible for the ending of *Hell in the Pacific* (C.I.R.O.), which has the two characters frozen on the point of death. As an ending it's as glib as the last shot of *The Victors*, but no doubt the producers thought it would be symbolic of something or other. Which is really the trouble with the film as a whole: it keeps announcing itself as an allegory, but the symbolism is at once too vague and too facile to provide any indication of just what the message is supposed to be.

Still, the basic idea is intriguing, even if its logic won't bear much examination. Two men, a Japanese naval officer (Toshiro Mifune) and an American pilot (Lee Marvin), are marooned together on an uninhabited Pacific island towards the end of the last war; neither speaks the other's language, and as instinctive enemies their initial reaction is to kill each other. But this is the one thing they obviously can't do

(or no film), and the only alternative is that they should learn to live together—which of course is what they do. Having got themselves marooned on the island with their characters, the problem for Boorman and his scriptwriters (Alexander Jacobs and Eric Bercovici) is simply to keep the audience interested in the fairly predictable progression from mutual hostility and humiliation through wary (and weary) acceptance of the *status quo* to final co-operation and the beginnings of friendship. The fact that interest oddly begins to tail off at what one would expect to be the point of climax—when the two men leave the island on a raft—is a measure both of Boorman's ingenuity and of his flair for recording (as in *Point Blank*) the irrational responses of rational men to an alien environment. But it is also an indication of the film's failure to work on the level it sets for itself.

Boorman hasn't altogether resisted the temptation to show the island in all its picturesque colours (there are some clumsy sunset silhouettes and the camera too often lingers on expanses of sea and sand), but for most of the time his visual style, moody and angular, is cleverly orchestrated to reflect the chopping and changing in the two men's reactions to each other. In the opening sequence, for instance, Mifune is seen in close-up, king of the island as he sits cross-legged in his den keeping a watchful eye on his makeshift water trap; Marvin, the intruder, is stranded in long shot at the far end of the beach. It's a pity that for their first encounter Boorman has them freeze at opposite ends of the frame so that they can preface their actual fight with murderous hallucinations. But with this first nod to the war out of the way, and the soundtrack cacophony of synthetic Oriental *musique concrète* gradually giving way to natural sound, the film begins to find its own rhythm and its own level.

Active hostility is soon abandoned in favour of defence of territory and possessions, with Mifune building a wall of fire to keep Marvin away from his water supply, then standing back to admire his work as

Marvin is engulfed in smoke. When the flames die, Marvin of course simply walks round the defence works. Mifune responds with a barricade of bamboo spikes and an elaborate warning system of jangling shells; Marvin resorts to psychological warfare, driving Mifune out by banging on his tin water bottle. Each in turn taunts and humiliates the other until they both get bored with cat and mouse manoeuvres which by this time are no more than childish games (Marvin peevishly miming a fetching dog routine while a captive Mifune glowers at him with withering disdain, or later breaking off from a sulky contemplation of crabs to spoil the garden which Mifune has carefully raked out in the sand).

In these scenes, when the two men are allowed to drop their masks (when, that is, they are not busy tying each other to cruciform yokes or running interminably towards each other through the jungle with knife and bamboo spear poised for a confrontation which never comes), they are not a Japanese and an American but simply two Crusoes whose efforts to communicate with each other end in exasperated incomprehension ('You're not listening,' growls Marvin as he sits on a carpet of bamboo branches trying to explain the mechanics of buoyancy). But once the raft is launched, they are no longer alone on the Pacific; the war outside gradually impinges. The raft takes them to another island and a camp occupied and abandoned by both the Japanese and the Americans. A bottle of sake, a packet of cigarettes, a *Life* magazine spread on the Japanese retreat, and in no time they are back where they started—the American and the Japanese. The end is in sight; it may not exactly be Boorman's, but something very like it is implicit in all those earlier interpolations of allegorical significance.

DAVID WILSON

## THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER

AT THE BEGINNING of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (Warner-Pathé), an ample, well-fed stomach jogs along the sidewalk beside a child's hoop. The camera cuts back to let us watch a fat, balding man pause in his bowling to enjoy a game of hopscotch, then hover longingly outside a pastry-shop before smashing the window and diving into the goodies. Meanwhile, another man, small and neat, is gazing worriedly into a room which is empty except for a large teddy-bear on the bed, and he arrives on the scene of the crime just as a police car screeches to a halt. As he bails his friend out, the fat man gesticulates in wild, apologetic explanation, and both of them dissolve into gales of silent laughter: they are deaf-mutes, and we never discover just what it was they found so funny.

Like the film as a whole, the sequence is naïve and over-stressed, and yet it works. As always in her writing, the emotions described in Carson McCullers' novel are so elusive and shadowy anyway that any attempt at 'sensitivity'—such as Zinnemann was after in *The Member of the Wedding*—is tautological and almost certainly doomed to failure. Much better the direct line of attack which Huston took in *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, setting down the series of grotesque happenings as though they were



the most natural thing in the world, and waiting for the reverberations to follow. Not that Robert Ellis Miller is a John Huston, but his bald statement of the facts from *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* does bludgeon its way to a quiet, touching outcry against the terrors of loneliness.

As a result of his escapade, the fat mute (Chuck McCann) is consigned to an asylum, and his friend (Alan Arkin) moves to new lodgings and a new job to be near him. Gradually, attracted by the stranger's courteous concern, all the town oddballs and misfits find themselves sitting at his feet pouring out their woes. There's the landlord's pubescent daughter (Sondra Locke), stuck at the awkward age and fumbling with a passionate love of music; a black doctor (Percy Rodriguez), dying of cancer and tormented by his children's failure to share his concern for the betterment of his people; and a semi-alcoholic drifter (Stacy Keach) with a Messianic-Communist complex. In one of those strangely depopulated little studio towns which seem such a fitting landscape for the dark side of the human soul favoured by Southern writers, each of these characters is picked up in turn to live a little of his heightened existence, eagerly share his reflections with the mute, and then leave in the certainty that he or she has at last found friendship and understanding. They are, of course, deluded. What they don't know is that, even as he entertains his new friends, the mute yearns for something they cannot give; and when he suddenly, inexplicably (his friend in the asylum has died) commits suicide, each of them is left baffled, a trifle resentful, affirming his love and swearing never to forget him.

This bitter reflection on the essential one-sidedness of human relationships is beautifully pinned down in a scene where it suddenly dawns on the girl, Mick, that the mute may be lonely too. She is in his room listening to a record he has bought, knowing how starved she is for music, and in an attempt to express something of her feelings she tries to describe the music so that he can share it. As the words excitedly pour

out she begins to beat time, and is delighted when the mute joins in. Then the music stops, and she watches baffled as the mute, his back to the record-player, continues conducting the ensuing silence.

Mick's response to the gift of the record is alive, immediate and full-hearted. The friend in the asylum, on the other hand, receives the presents the mute showers on him with regal disdain, unless they happen to be eatable, in which case (as on their outing together) he devotes his entire attention to stuffing himself. What is it that the mute gets from this friendship? Something vital, valuable only to himself and no more visible to another eye or heart than the sympathy the other characters annex to themselves out of his neutral, unblinking silence. The mute, beautifully played by Alan Arkin in a kind of expressionless calm pregnant with meaning, is the Cheshire Cat at the centre of the film. "Each man," as Carson McCullers put it, "described the mute as he wished him to be."

TOM MILNE

## LA COLLECTIONNEUSE

BEFORE THE EMERGENCE of the *Cahiers* group, it was a widely held superstition that the capacity for analysing, articulating, extrapolating and interpreting that constituted the critic's greatest asset was liable to prove insuperably inhibiting to him as a creative artist. With his first feature, *Le Signe du Lion*, Eric Rohmer—like others of his colleagues before him—decisively effected the difficult transition from spectator to participant. But curiously, although *La Collectionneuse* (Connoisseur) more than confirms his creative strength, it is, far more markedly than his earlier feature, a critic's film: perhaps more accurately still, a psychodrama in which the critical and creative faculties, separately embodied in the characters of Adrien and Daniel, a dilettante philosopher and an ascetic

painter, confront the raw material of existence (the unreflective Haydée), only to retreat defeated when they find it spilling over the circumscribed channels within which they have tried to contain it.

Three brief prologues serve to present us to the trio of characters whose summer stay in a Mediterranean villa lent them by a friend will provide the film with its narrative level. (For though the sixties have made the boxes-within-boxes construction almost a commonplace, *La Collectionneuse* is possibly the first film to be built of triangles-within-triangles.) The first prologue, introducing Haydée, is significantly a silent one. As she follows the tide along a sunlit beach, the camera moves in on different sections of her anatomy: smooth, bronzed legs that in close-up are seen to be peeling; vacant eyes, small breasts encased in a minuscule bikini sewn from sections of a map of the world. If Haydée is initially shown alone in her element, a physical being in an environment of sea, sun and sand, Daniel in contrast is first seen in conversation in his darkened study-cum-studio, surrounded by papers, volumes of surrealist literature and one of his 'object paintings', a yellow pot covered with projecting razor blades on which his earnest interlocutor cuts his fingers. Art, Daniel explains, should be hurtful, and the razor blades objectify the artist's desire to assume his place at the centre of a surrounding vacuum, to establish 'une sorte de vide autour de sa personne'. The natural space that encompassed Haydée on the empty beach is for Daniel something that must be consciously and artistically constructed. A self-confessed dandy, he professes a contempt for nature, which for him must be reinvented, first by intellectual effort, then by an abdication of the intellect.

The contrast between Haydée's 'being' and Daniel's 'nothingness' is immediately apparent, as are the limits of any possible rapport between them; but their relationship to the third character, Adrien, is less obvious. The final prologue is set in an elegant garden, a tamed corner of nature; it shows Adrien listening—of course—to a conversation between two girls about physical beauty and the degree to which people are responsible for and should be judged by their surfaces. At the end of the afternoon, Adrien quarrels with his girl friend because she will not abandon her projected trip to London and sets off for the villa, where he announces his intention of 'doing nothing well' in order ultimately to 'arriver au rien absolu', for which purpose he habitually places himself in Hamlet-like poses in dramatically isolated places (beneath an oak, on a wrought-iron chair in the middle of an empty lawn).

With the move to the villa, the objective technique of the prologues is replaced by Adrien's subjective commentary. And as Haydée abandons her indifferent promiscuity to concentrate on an affair with Daniel, Adrien's contempt for her grudgingly turns to fascination. But just as he fails to recognise Haydée (whose smile on her own admission means absolutely nothing) as the incarnation of that empty state of being to which he and Daniel in their different ways so cerebrally aspire, so Adrien fails to perceive his own extraneousness to the affair between her and Daniel, preferring to interpret her every act as a gesture calculated for its effect upon himself. His commentary (here dubbed into English with sadly disjunctive results) becomes a humorous object-lesson in the pitfalls of interpretative criticism.

ALAN BATES IN "THE FIXER".





This irrelevance of theory to physical reality is heightened by the graceful camerawork which, as Adrien's constructions become more and more tortuous, focuses increasingly not just on the beauty of the southern landscape but on isolated objects—a basket of salad, the American's Song vase, an armchair—captured in the elementary process of existing and unaffected by the theories so ingeniously imposed upon them. By the time Daniel has hurt Haydée and moved on to create a new vacuum in which to function, Adrien has become so enmeshed in his own fantasy constructions that he runs away from the girl when she is finally willing to accept him as her lover, leaving her, disillusioned by art and philosophy alike, to continue her difficult quest for 'des rapports normaux et possibles avec les gens'. Left alone in the villa, Adrien congratulates himself on having fortified the crumbling fortress of his morality. Free at last to perfect himself in the art of doing nothing, he appears to discover that without either art or audience he is nothing, and reaching for the 'phone arranges to join his girl friend in London.

JAN DAWSON

## OTLEY

DICK CLEMENT'S EXPERT and highly pleasurable first film *Otley* (Columbia), works primarily through its script, which is by Ian La Frenais and Dick Clement and is based on a novel by Martin Waddell. The dialogue is fresh, with a tendency towards wisecracking, the situations inventive, the characters well contrasted. The rather lunatic story, which has Gerald Arthur Otley (Tom Courtenay), a light-fingered layabout, involved with a whole series of agents and double-agents, is occasionally hard to follow; but people who believe that a complaint about script-obscure in a film like this is damaging aren't with us. Structurally it's unconventional—and possibly a mistake—to have the funniest sequence (the driving test) in the middle rather than at the end. A similar thing happened in *Bullitt*, when after the car-chase to end all car-chases we are brought back for another forty-five minutes of a rather ordinary story. *Otley* gets away with it, I think, though I'd have organised it differently myself.

In addition to a good script, there is a careful and affectionate use of London locations. 'Sunny street in a windy city' sings Don Partridge behind the credits, as Gerald Arthur Otley ambles down the Portobello Road looking for a place to sleep, 'I've got homeless bones'. The cheerfulness, casualness and intimacy of Bayswater and Chelsea living is captured. Albert and Lin (James Bolam and Fiona Lewis) live on a barge by Battersea Bridge; they run a stall, he flogs pot, she has room in her bed for Gerald Arthur Otley. Otley, in full flight down a street near the World's End, has time to commiserate with a friend about a football score and is roundly barked at by a woolly dog. In a police station he fiddles with the coloured arrows on a wall-map: "Ah," says the superintendent benignly, "I see you're directing all westbound traffic down Lexham Mews," a line which encapsulates much of the film's zany precision. And outside London the winter landscape of brown fields and dead bracken is a familiar one.

Feeling for place would probably go for

nothing without a comparable feeling for character. The real success of the film lies in the way it balances absurdity of character on a basis of solid observation. The most overdrawn figure, the poovish spy chief Proudfoot (Freddie Jones), is kept in check; funny as he is, any more of him and damage would have been done to the reality of the whole. Compared to Proudfoot, James Maxwell, as a slightly stuttering and over-modest British agent, whose appalling son Miles Otley believes to be head of MI5, and Leonard Rossiter as Johnston, a kindly, avuncular, gumboots and fishing-hat murderer, are much more believable as people; and although one may not laugh at them as much (certainly not at Johnston) they are multi-dimensional characters, and hence much more satisfying. It's the difference (going back a bit) between Alexander Mackendrick's Ealing comedies and those of Charles Crichton; or character against caricature. The driving-test examiner could have been simply a shrieking victim. Instead, he's a man in a grey mac and a pained tongue-clucking expression who, when Otley yells in desperation as the Ford Zephyr hares after them round a corner on two wheels, "Why can't the bastards leave me alone?" says stiffly, "We all have our jobs to do, Mr. Otley."

Linked to this insistence on character is an emphasis on the narrative. However ridiculous the story is, it is what holds the whole thing together. When Otley finds himself facing the wrong end of a gun the situation is taken seriously. James Villiers as Hendrickson is a chilling villain, and the final scenes in which he stalks Otley with a shotgun round the deserted farm are fairly nightmarish; as is the violence of his ghastly bone-crushing death under the coach. The death of Johnston, by exploding suitcase in Notting Hill Gate station, is another such moment. In fact, *Otley* is a comedy which takes its material with proper seriousness and treats its characters like human beings. Tom Courtenay, as we knew long ago with *Billy Liar*, is a comic personality with an enviable classless appeal. There are a few places where firmer editing would have improved things, but it's a minor matter. *Otley* is a stunningly capable debut, and one waits eagerly for Dick Clement's next.

JAMES PRICE

TOM COURTENAY ON THE DEFENSIVE IN "OTLEY".



## SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHERIFF

BURT KENNEDY first attracted attention as the scriptwriter of the Ranown cycle of Westerns, made by Budd Boetticher and starring Randolph Scott in the Fifties. On the evidence of these scripts one could discern an austere and bleak sensibility which found its most congenial expression within the Western form. This is not an impression sustained by Burt Kennedy as director. Assignments such as *The Canadians* (1961), *West of Montana* (1963), *The Rounders* (1964), *Return of the Seven* (1966) and *The War Wagon* (1967) reveal an affection for the form and a tendency to humour and parody, but also a striking lack of thematic consistency or strong directorial signature.

Because of the difficulty of relating *Support Your Local Sheriff* (United Artists) to any of Kennedy's previous films, one is inclined to discuss it in terms of the Western genre, in which case the contribution of William Bowers (who wrote and produced it) is almost as central as Kennedy's. *Support Your Local Sheriff* is resonant with archetypal themes: the corrupting effect of the discovery of gold, the redemption of the town pariah, dynastic control of a town, the bringing of order by the fast gun and the ambivalence of the townspeople's response to the sheriff's need for help. Both Bowers' script and Kennedy's *mise en scène* pay homage in particular to *My Darling Clementine*, *High Noon* and *Rio Bravo*. As in *Rio Bravo*, the central plot strategy is a man imprisoned for a bar-room killing and the attempts of his family to break him out of jail. Sometimes Kennedy deliberately recalls *My Darling Clementine* (Walter Brennan as the father of the three bearded and loutish Danby brothers; James Garner sitting, chair tilted, on the porch outside his office), sometimes *High Noon* (the lone figure of the sheriff, in black clothes and white shirt, walking the deserted streets intercut with the approach of the Danby clan, the townspeople's discussion about whether to help him).

But *Support Your Local Sheriff* is a comedy Western. In addition to the jokes in Bowers' script (the local brothel is called Madame Orr's), Kennedy defuses visually several archetypal situations of the Western: an attempt by the Danbys to free their kinsman results not in the bars being wrenched out by the ropes tied to them, but in the bars remaining intact and the family being unhorsed; a confrontation in the street ends with the sheriff driving out the hired gun by throwing stones at him; the sheriff calls a truce in a raging gun battle in order to cross the street to a better firing position. The casting is an important dimension of the comic tone. James Garner, shedding the guise of grim psychopath he wore in *Hour of the Gun*, once more reveals the talent for comedy he exercised in the Maverick television series, and Jack Elam (I was an Orr-handler at Madame Horse's) shows an unsuspected flair for the visual and verbal doubletake which is heightened by his villainous aspect and cumulative profile as badman in countless Westerns.

It is no mean achievement to maintain a comic tone within the Western form, which has become progressively more flinty over the years. There was a time, up to about the end of the Second World War when



violence within the Western was totally stylised; shot men clutched themselves and fell gracefully with never a trace of blood. Kennedy elides the violence of the five fatal shootings in *Support Your Local Sheriff* partly by a return to such stylisation and partly by ensuring that the shot men are marginal figures the audience has not come to know. Similarly, the audience is not required to confront the consequences to Joe Danby of his having murdered a man. To see this good-natured simpleton hanged or even sentenced to death on screen would not accord with the film's cheerful tone.

Some years ago the baroque disdain for the form evident in *Cat Ballou* seemed to signal the death of the Western. In *Support Your Local Sheriff* Burt Kennedy and William Bowers remind us that it is possible to make a comic Western and yet love and understand the genre.

COLIN MCARTHUR

## THE ILLUSTRATED MAN

"HE WAS A RIOT of rockets and fountains and people, in such intricate detail and colour that you could hear the voices murmuring small and muted, from the crowds that inhabited his body. When his flesh twitched, the tiny mouths flickered, the tiny green-and-gold eyes winked, the tiny pink hands gestured." One feared the worst for Ray Bradbury's *Illustrated Man*. Apart from his open invitation to psychedelic effects, he was, after all, simply a convenient peg, each of his illustrations telling one of the eighteen stories which made up the original book and which could so easily be tailored into a *film à sketches*. Miraculously, though, Jack Smight and his scriptwriter Howard Kreitsek have resisted the temptation to either simplify or betray, and their *The Illustrated Man* (Warner-Pathé) is a new Bradbury story in all but author's credit.

What they have done, in effect, is to tell three of the original stories ("The Veldt", "The Long Rain" and "The Last Night of the World"), giving them a new unity by having the principal characters in each played by the Illustrated Man (Rod Steiger), the young hitch-hiker he encounters (Robert Drivas), and the strange witch-woman (Claire Bloom) who created his illustrations before vanishing "back into the future." In addition, the Illustrated Man has now become a sort of Wandering Jew, condemned to roam the earth in his quest for vengeance on the witch who created these terrible, living auguries on his body. "I . . . will . . . KILL . . . her" he tells young Willie at their first meeting; and when we first see her, she sits half-hidden by foliage on the porch of a tumbledown cottage, strange, beautiful and ominous as a Mizoguchi ghost-lady. Like Willie, who becomes more and more obsessed by her until he tries to murder the Illustrated Man, one becomes hopelessly tangled in the equivocal nature of the good and evil in these characters and their stories.

Cunningly, Smight and Kreitsek have constructed the whole film round the ambivalence which is at the root of all Bradbury's work. More than just the topsyturviness attendant upon visions of the future, this involves a whole new scale of moral and aesthetic values—for instance, in the strange epiphany of the death of the



"THE ILLUSTRATED MAN".

astronaut in "Kaleidoscope". Falling helplessly in space, torn by meteorites, he knows he will burn to a cinder as soon as he hits the Earth's atmosphere: "Look, Mom, look! A falling star!" says the little boy looking up at the sky. "Make a wish," says his mother, "Make a wish."

So although the three stories are separate entities, they draw the three characters—who never meet on the same time plane—into a tormented triangle where one can never say precisely who is the betrayer, who the betrayed. In the first, the Illustrated Man and Felicia are the parents of two children who enjoy a nursery which changes into any setting they choose. Discovering that the children have an unhealthy obsession with Africa and lions, the parents lock up the nursery. Arriving to investigate, the psychologist in charge (Willie) finds no sign of the parents. But in the nursery the children are picnicking on the African veldt, while behind them lions gnaw at bloody carcasses. "May I offer you a cup of tea, doctor?" says the little girl tranquilly; dissolve to the Illustrated Man (in the present) offering the horrified Willie a cup of coffee.

In the second story, three astronauts (including Willie) lost on Mars succumb to the perpetual driving rain which beats down on them like the Chinese water torture. A fourth (the Illustrated Man) presses on, ruthlessly sacrificing everyone and everything in his quest for survival, and eventually reaches the haven of the Sun Dome, where he finds warmth and comfort, and Felicia waiting to welcome him. Cut back to the present and Willie saying furiously to the Illustrated Man, "She couldn't have wanted *you*." In the third and last story, the Illustrated Man becomes the victim. It is—everyone has dreamed it, so it must be so—the last night on Earth. He plans to give his children poison tablets to spare them the agony, but his wife (Felicia) will not hear of it and persuades him to let

them await the end. In the morning, Felicia wakes to find the world continuing. "It didn't happen," she cries, but he is crouched like a hunted animal over the dead bodies of the children. "You bastard," cries Willie's voice, "you killed your own children." Then, back in the present, Willie confronts the Illustrated Man: "You're evil. You killed them, didn't you? You kill people. You made love to her, didn't you?"

The Illustrated Man denies the charges: "You're the one who was curious, you're the one who wanted to see the future." And we cut back to the past, to Felicia's face, to the Illustrated Man luxuriating naked on her couch just as she and her surroundings disappear back into the future, leaving him in the middle of nowhere to start his hopeless quest. And in the present, Willie, staring at the patch on the Illustrated Man's skin reserved for his own future, sees himself being strangled. Picking up a rock, he dashes it down and runs away in terror, with the bleeding, half-blinded figure of the Illustrated Man stumbling in pursuit. "Each person who tries to see beyond his own time," says a neutral voice, "has to face questions to which there cannot be absolute answers."

There are no absolute answers as to what *The Illustrated Man* is trying to say or do, and some of its ambivalences may well be accidental. But at least it is an attempt at imagination; one in which one is always agog to know what will happen next; in which the settings—a pastel-shaded, sleekly orbicular home of the future; a shrivelled, water-logged Mars which looks as though it were fashioned out of human brain cortex; a Garden of Eden where lion and lamb graze serenely outside a translucent tent—are superbly apposite; and the acting, in particular Steiger with his towering rages pierced by pathetic vulnerability, is admirable.

TOM MILNE



# BOOK REVIEWS

**THE PARADE'S GONE BY**, by Kevin Brownlow. Illustrated. (Secker & Warburg, £5 10s.)

IF THE ARTS COUNCIL is interested in promoting film appreciation in this country, the best thing it could do would be to subsidise an impossibly cheap edition of *The Parade's Gone By*, so that even the most hard-up, behind-with-their-subscription associate members of the BFI could afford to buy it without having to forgo a single session at the Waterloo Bridge theatre, and even the most determined of clingers to long-standing fallacies (the famous double entendre in this case irrelevant) would no longer have the excuse of ignorance for the oafishness of which, in an article in *Film* some months ago, Kevin Brownlow so bitterly complained.

Starting with an account of audience reactions to Gance's *Napoléon* at the Multiscreen Festival at the Odeon, and how they 'shrieked with merriment' at the sub-title 'Soldats!', 'hooted' at a close-up of Josephine, and to sum up, tittered at one of the greatest achievements in cinema history, he continues, "Go to the National Film Theatre whenever a silent film is shown and listen to some of the audience. . . Laughing at silent films has become a popular pastime. It enables you to advertise your sophistication to your neighbours."

Well, *The Parade's Gone By* is a tremendous work in every sense of the word. If it doesn't succeed in educating—or rather re-educating—these arrogant nits into a civilised attitude towards the non-dialogue cinema, it would at least be the perfect weapon with which to prowl the audience during the showing of a silent masterpiece and beat them, in all poetic justice, hard over the head. "A vivid, affectionate portrait of the golden days of Hollywood" is how the publishers describe it. And the golden era which so miraculously lives again throughout its 575 overflowing pages is almost unimaginably different from that brassy, yet fundamentally leaden period of the 1930s and '40s so mistakenly labelled 'golden' by the Press and the BBC, when, with a few exceptions—Hitchcock, Bette Davis, *The Grapes of Wrath*—what emerged from Hollywood was a series of un-films at which one gazes in dank stupefaction as week after week they are proudly trotted out on to the TV screen, products of battery-farm studios with nothing to distinguish the work of one director from another; with dialogue the like of which in all its dreadful mechanical lifelessness has never been spoken on land or sea by man or beast but only on film unless in imitation of the films; with all the leading actresses wearing identical masks and giving identical performances, and the dead hand of the producer over all.

Needless now to say that Brownlow's 'golden' is the golden that silence is; and the long-lost Hollywood which he re-creates for us with such multitudinous life and in all its multifarious aspects—many of them scarcely ever touched on before—is the city where a new art was born and nurtured, grew and flourished and, with many a masterpiece achieved, was reaching towards peaks of expression unique in any art when it was snuffed out. Like that. Finished. And from then onwards, some of its finest works destroyed, its very nature turned into a laughing-stock, made to appear in false and distorted retrospect entirely different from what in fact and in truth it had been.

The two most significant stills in the book—historically significant, I should say—are the only ones out of all the enormous collection likely to depress rather than to exhilarate the reader: they share a page and are captioned THE CHANGING FACE OF FILMS. Above: Griffith, Chaplin, Pickford, Fairbanks. They have just signed an agreement uniting them under a single banner beneath which each will be able to work separately and independently to bring to the screen his or her vision of life without reference to the Hollywood tycoons—the furriers and fishmongers *manqués*. The faces of this quartet of newly united artists are equally, in their different ways, sensitive, mobile, vulnerable. Below we see the faces of the men

who formed the 'management group' of United Artists thirty-seven years later.

The PRO's of Hollywood in the silent days—admen as they were then known—had certain stock phrases and slogans, stereotyped hyperbole, which never varied. Almost any movie not a B production was 'A Superfilm', a mob was 'Cast of Many Thousands', the film in which the mob appeared, 'So-and-so's Immortal Epic'. And if all these labels were to be applied to *The Parade's Gone By* they would, for once, be justified.

A 'Super Production' it most indubitably is. The stills alone are worth the price of the book. How sick one is of the same old 'classic' stills or blow-ups which appear in every history of the cinema or text-book of film art—one hardly needs to turn to them, one knows what they are going to be. *Parade* is abundantly illustrated—super-abundantly—there are literally hundreds of stills and blow-ups and they're all riveting; not a stale one to be seen. What is more, with marvellously imaginative perception, they are framed in dead black and there are dead black pages between the chapters.

One realises what nonsense it was ever to talk about the 'Silver Screen'. It was darkness, darkness, the palpitating, beckoning darkness that was the ambience of the silent cinema; and it is the dark blank pages, the dark frames and borders which, as one opens the massive volume and begins to lose oneself in it, work such powerful magic that one experiences again the sense of mysterious excitement, the bliss of entering a cinema and settling into one's seat that one felt when cinemas were still called picture palaces—the days before the Fall. As for 'Cast of Many Thousands', it is an understatement, with moreover fascinating detail-shots of individual members of those seething mobs, and for good measure the truth as far as it could be ascertained of how many crowd artists were drowned during the great sea battles of the 1926 *Ben-Hur*.

The quality above all others that makes Kevin Brownlow's book such a treasure and a joy is the freshness of his approach: the ungovernable enthusiasm, the love, the endless patience and indefatigability that led him all over America tracking down forgotten directors or actors whose work he had somehow come across and admired and was determined to rescue from oblivion. And he's full of heart-warming heresies, even against the accepted canon of silent-film classics laid down by Rotha, Lejeune and Jacobs in the thirties. There is a magnificently exciting chapter on the filming of the chariot race in *Ben-Hur*, and when Brownlow up and says it is as fine a piece of cinema as the Odessa Steps (heresy! heresy!) one wants to stand up and cheer.

RODNEY ACKLAND

**THE PICTURE PALACE**, by Dennis Sharp. Illustrated. (Hugh Evelyn, 75s.)

A CERTAIN AMOUNT of time in my youth was spent at the Loew's Paradise cinema in the Bronx, New York, slumped down with legs under the seat in front and head tilted back. I was looking up at the Mediterranean sky above the cypresses. There doves were circling, stars twinkling, clouds were scudding by. The cloud effect was especially tantalising because I could never detect the same cloud shape go by twice. Preoccupied with the problems of nature, only now and then would I sit up and turn my troubled gaze forward to the film, like Lorenzo de Medici who was already contemplating the screen in his *tempietto* on the right. In 1961 Ben M. Hall's *The Best Remaining Seats* at last told me that the atmospheric sky effects were rendered by a battery of Brenograph projectors (illustration provided). Hall also had information on theatre organs, cinema chain chiefs, stage shows, pictures of contemporary house gear, ushers' uniforms, ads, brochures and the great buildings themselves. But Hall's marvellous book (Clarkson N. Potter, New York) was about cinemas in the USA only. This new, much smaller one by Dennis Sharp attends strictly to architecture, and that of British film theatres, with brief chapters covering the USA (relying mainly on Hall), the Continent, and specialist cinemas (drive-ins, news theatres, art houses). It's good to have a concise documentation of all this.

A movie theatre—to ignore cinema archaeology and start in the middle—is nothing much besides a box with seats, sight lines and acoustics. When the relatively undemanding allowances have been made for booking, projection, milling around and public nosing, the object may look like a bulgy whale on the outside, black from asphalt roofing; it could look like anything at all on the inside. Into this valley of functional permissiveness 45 years ago rode what must have been the world's least culturally hung-up six hundred, the picture house entrepreneurs. Extravagantly decorated cinemas got built in some of the poorest districts; deliberately built there, like Roman Catholic churches, Sharp says. This is a point worth reflecting on because in Roman Catholic churches, at least since the



seventeenth century when architectural technology was rather stable and well understood, the decoration became extravagant along the same lines and for the same reasons. The church of Die Wies, for example, is a bulgy whale on the outside and a stomach full of whipped cream on the inside; as in the evolving designs of cinemas, skeleton framing permitted the first and people appreciated the second.

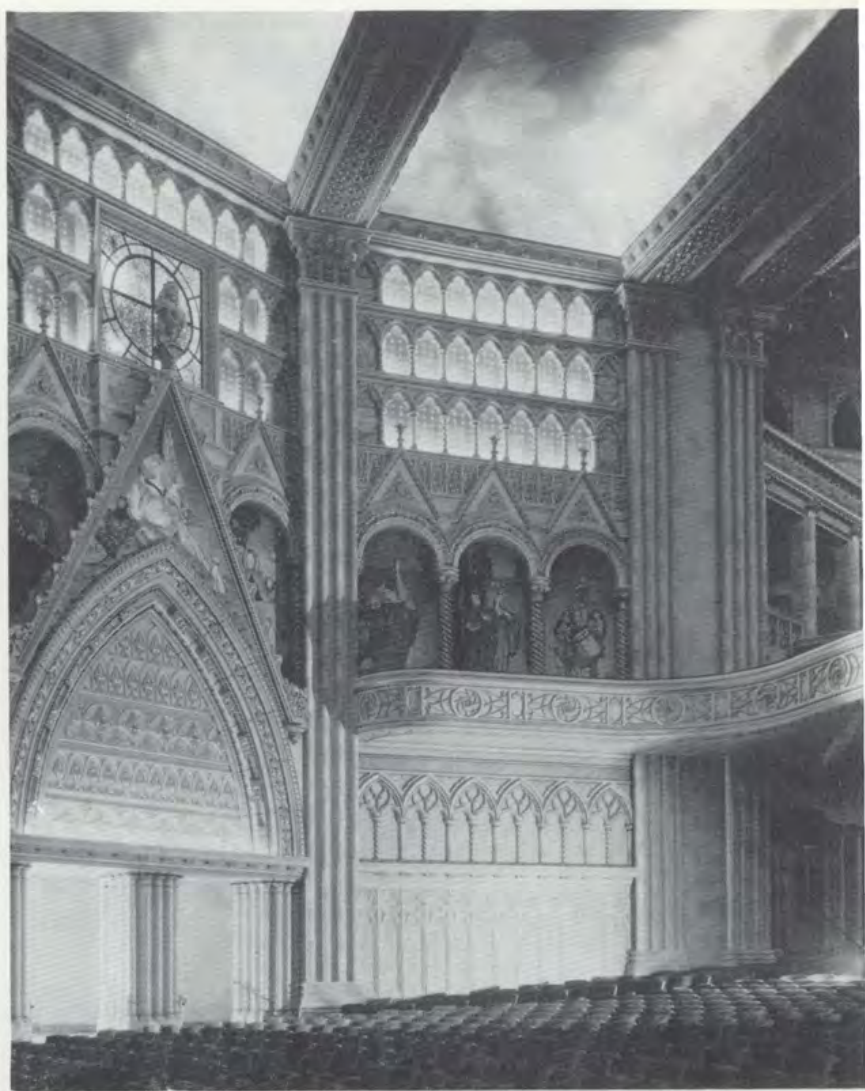
Unfortunately, Sharp thinks all that decoration in cinemas was *infra dig* and has kept them out of the class of real architecture. In this he agrees with most of the architectural profession, whose journals ignored movie houses when they were opening like morning glories. But the highly decorated houses were usually excellent; to appreciate them no camp sensibility is required. They were well cherished by their often sparsely endowed communities. The complicated plan shapes were exactly suited to the usually irregular downtown sites. Functionally, stucco and drapes made good acoustical enclosures and allowed for dim lighting in a discreet, fragmented way. Culturally, the auditoriums with their uplifting examples from the past were no more inappropriate than movies like *Intolerance*. And even if they were eclectic and phony as hell, the level of invention in some of the decorated interiors was remarkable. A few fostered highbrow art fully treasured only 35 years later, such as Thomas Wilfred's 'colour music' which shone around the Salomonic columns at the Brooklyn Paramount. An indirect benefit was the upkeep of skills: I can testify that New York still has some of the ablest metalworkers and plasterers in the world, mostly linked to firms that did work for Warner Brothers, Major Bowes and Roxy.

Since Sharp's biases are all in favour of the architecture of the Modern Movement—cinemas like the old Curzon in Mayfair, and the excellent circuit of Odeons designed in the 1930s by the Birmingham architect Harry Weedon for Oscar Deutsch—he rather uncritically leans on Ben Hall's classification when he discusses the American super-cinemas and their British descendants. This breaks down the decorated interiors into the 'standard' (or 'hardtop') school, largely academic-eclectic auditoriums with traditional Baroque-type ceilings, such as most of the 300 or more cinemas designed by Thomas W. Lamb in the USA; and the 'atmospheric' school, pioneered by 'Opera House John' Ebersson in Houston, Texas in 1923. Whatever Hall's perceptions he is no architectural historian, and both writers are content merely to classify here.

What Ebersson actually did, from his Tampa Theatre in Florida to the Loew's Paradise I used to admire in the Bronx, was to expand and amplify the late Baroque effect of the illusionistic ceiling, carrying on past the limits of decoration of South German Rococo (Ebersson was born in Austria and trained at Vienna and Dresden). The Baroque Bibienas did simple perspective domes painted on flat vaults, and later decorators showed whirlwinds of angels and saints as seen through a 'hole' in the ceiling above the ring of a cornice. Later, in churches like Steinhausen and Die Wies in the 1730s and '40s, the Zimmermann brothers painted well-populated heavens above no crisp ring, but a broken 'skyline' of gates, tabernacles and even (at Steinhausen) trees. When Ebersson took up the idea again in the 1920s, he really turned the world inside out: you apparently sit out-of-doors, and the walls of his cinema auditoriums are the outsides of buildings. Trellises and soaring loggias are silhouetted against a sky like a planetarium dome, and up above birds actually fly through the cloudy but twinkling Brenograph dawn. It would seem obvious that the generations who sat in Ebersson-inspired cinemas from Omaha, Nebraska to the Astoria on the Charing Cross Road and the Granada in Tooting (dim reflections these last) were being made ready for the kinetic art of the '60s—discotheque lighting, battery projection, even multi-screen films (taking ceiling and screen together, every Ebersson 'atmospheric' was a multi-screen film). However, Ebersson can't be given credit for everything; drive-ins, from the first in Camden, New Jersey in the early '30s, are natural multi-screens too.

Between Hall and Sharp, one gets some notion of the buildings that mattered to their communities: besides the Eberssons, Lamb's Loew's 72nd Street and 175th Street, the Roxy, Paramount, Capitol and Radio City Music Hall in New York; Grauman's Egyptian and Chinese in Los Angeles; the Foxes in San Francisco and Atlanta; Eric Mendelsohn's Universum in Berlin; the Handelsblad Cineac in Amsterdam. In England there was the early Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, the Empire in Leicester Square through a number of facelifts, the neon sign of Studios One and Two, the New Victoria, the old Regal. The Weedon Odeons were practically the only buildings going up in the Depression, so their stylism (streamline forms, thin roofs, acres of curving tile and fretted brick prisms) became a real style that could be seen through the 1951 Festival of Britain.

Sharp's book provides a selected list of cinemas and gives recognition to some architects underestimated or forgotten: Atkinson, Leathart, Verity, Cromie, Komisarjevsky, Weedon. But his chapter



THE GRANADA, TOOTING. ARCHITECTS, C. MASSEY AND R. H. UREN; INTERIOR BY KOMISARJEVSKY.

on 'Design Considerations' is piffling, and his judgments are mainly questionable. Sharp underestimates the 'atmospherics' and overestimates the 'functionals'; he considers that the new Curzon is a better auditorium than the New Victoria. He thinks the Odeon at Elephant and Castle is 'the most exciting building of its type to go up in England for many years'. Weedon's output (over 60 schemes on the drawing board at one time) made it 'impossible to develop a design fully', instead of the reverse; pitched roofs on corner sites are 'always visually disastrous'. The 'truly modern cinema' (as Betjeman called it in 1935) 'still has not appeared', but Le Corbusier's rather poverty-stricken *Poème Electronique* at the 1958 Brussels Expo was 'incredulous and unforgettable' (did Sharp really see it?). The concluding section on 'Innovation and Experiment in Recent Cinema Design' doesn't come up as far as the experimental buildings for film programmes at Expo '67 in Montreal (such as the National Film Board of Canada's *Labyrinth*, a number of film experiences along a promenade) nor the new London Cincenta.

Is architecture necessary? The claim familiarly heard for the essence of big-screen aesthetics is that we are swamped by the experience, the picture engulfs us: '... I witness giant kisses on mouths like the crevasses of the Grand Canyon, embraces of titans, a whole propaganda of the flesh which maddens, without satisfying ...'. McLuhan and now movie-makers presumably suppose Paul Morand's obsessive views are everybody's. Yet a little reflection about being at the movies suggests that the projected image doesn't fully take over. Like other types of intense concentration, the link-up there is fragmentary and real purity may be impossible; or more to the point, just possible but undesirable. It's not a dream show but a waking image accessible to reflection. As in alloys, such impurities are more than fringe benefits: they induce a qualitative transformation. We pipe in experiences in an environment, which is what culture is. The local environment is continuous with the rest. Perceptions scan screen, audience and



auditorium together; they all count. Isn't there someone you like to have at the movies with you, even if the two of you don't speak? And everyone knows that the National Film Theatre, the Casino Cinerama and a local circuit house involve differently adjusted perceptions. This being so, it is fatuous to argue—not as Dennis Sharp, but as some of his architectural reviewers have—that, functional matters aside, the true architectural form of the cinema is formlessness. On the contrary, the true architectural form of the cinema is one decisive gesture or another in the prevailing culture, and even a preference for abstention is unavoidably a formal act.

NATHAN SILVER

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Cinéastes

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—I write on a small matter, but it may be of interest.

On page 90 of your Spring issue, Jan Dawson, in writing on *Skammen*, refers to the "more sophisticated techniques of the contemporary cinéaste." The context implies that she is here using the term 'cinéaste' to mean film-maker. Tom Milne on page 63 of the same issue uses the term quite clearly to mean film-goer or film-lover. The latter usage has become increasingly established in English (David Robinson is another leading film critic to use it thus), and it must probably be accepted now as an English word. It might be noted, however, that in French and Italian it invariably means film-maker, while the term for lover-of-films is, e.g. *cinéophile*, *amateur du film*, etc. Apart from setting a trap for future compilers of specialist dictionaries, this may have one practical consequence. If I am correct in assuming that Miss Dawson uses the term in its French sense, *cinéaste* should then appear in italics as a foreign word; while, as used by Mr. Milne and others, it is an English word and remains in Roman.

Yours faithfully,

NEVILLE MARCH HUNTINGS

London, S.E.25.

### Queen of Blood

SIR,—A couple of issues back, Axel Madsen, in an article on the 'new generation' of Hollywood film-makers, referred to *Games* as Curtis Harrington's second feature film. This is wrong. *Games* is his third, *Queen of Blood* his second. The latter concerns an interplanetary vampire (Florence Marly) innocently rescued by an unsuspecting Earthship, half of whose crew are done in eventually by the frightening lady before she herself dies, a haemophiliac. Despite the narrative, I doubt Harrington was responsible for the title; it seems more likely to be the work of the American distributors, American International Pictures. As is routine with this sort of thing, the film got only perfunctory bookings in this country, usually on the lower half of double bills with more readily exploitable A.I.P. products like a Vincent Price vehicle, and, as a result, it is little known outside sci-fi fandom circles. Nevertheless, the special effects, although most are merely drawings like those in *Forbidden Planet*, oddly recall Fritz Lang and, knowing Harrington, I'm sure this was intentional. George Edwards, who produced the subsequent *Games*, did likewise here, and the cast included John Saxon, the late Basil Rathbone (his last decent film role), Judi Meredith and Dennis Hopper.

Yours faithfully,

DAN BATES

Dallas, Texas.

### Who Laughs Last

SIR,—I wonder if the reason for falling attendances at the NFT is not perhaps due to the appalling behaviour of a section of the audience which seems regularly to attend. The bulk of these members appear to be devotees of high camp, which means that practically any film made prior to 1950 is going to be subjected to the big send-up and barrages of laughter. Now any fool can laugh at something that's thirty years old, when tastes, fashions and fads change as rapidly as they have during the past twenty years, but those who laugh now would do well to consider what today's intellectual, social and artistic climate will look like thirty years on.

I recently saw Buñuel's *L'Age d'Or* at the NFT, and if one were to judge from the reaction of the audience you'd have thought it was Saturday morning pictures! But how many of those sneering

philistines could or would have matched Buñuel's courage to make such a film in 1930? He spent twenty years in the wilderness because of that film and was made to pay dearly for its savage truths. A large measure of sympathetic rapport is needed when one views old films, and a tolerant understanding that will help one see them through similar eyes to when they were first shown.

I've seen many films at the NFT which were made long before I was born, but I don't get any feeling of intellectual superiority by sending them up. *L'Age d'Or* is still a savage and devastating masterpiece, and those who laughed at it displayed the same lack of feeling and sensitivity as the callous guests at the party in the film whose small talk was undisturbed when a maid's body was propelled into the room after an explosion in the scullery.

NFT audiences do need to grow up, and it's about time somebody said so (if you think these are strong words just see *any* Bette Davis film there); and members should appreciate that the NFT's function is not that of a glorified Classic, but acts as a showplace functioning in much the same way as an art gallery or museum.

Yours faithfully,

DAVID GODIN

Bexleyheath, Kent.

### Anna-Magdalena Bach

SIR,—Jean-Marie Straub's *Chronicle of Anna-Magdalena Bach* was also shown at last year's Edinburgh Film Festival, where it was enthusiastically received before going on to Venice and London.

Film House,

Edinburgh.

Yours faithfully,

MURRAY GRIGOR

Director, Edinburgh Film Festival

### MEMORIES OF RESNAIS

continued from page 129

appeared twice. But for one thing, he didn't turn up in the same spot. Also, we tried to distract the audience during the camera movement just to avoid making them think that Albertazzi must have been running around behind the sets.

You certainly succeeded. What about TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS?

Oh, it's funny, very funny indeed. The only criticism I could make would be about the way the film looks. It seems to me that the kind of sumptuous *mise en scène* Robbe-Grillet is after needs a lot of money to be realised properly, with every detail perfect. But the conditions in which he is obliged to work don't allow him this luxury. It's a shame; in his books, every comma, every full stop is in its place, but he can't afford to make his films as visually perfect, as *soigné*.

Is it true you once wanted to make a film of Marguerite Duras' MODERATO CANTABILE?

I know I have always said that I don't want to adapt novels, but just before *Hiroshima* I had thought about making a 16 mm. version of *Moderato*. I think the reason was the same one that impelled me to make my early shorts about painters: I just wanted to meet them. I admired Marguerite's novels so much that I conceived this fantasy that the only way I would get to meet her was to make a 16 mm. amateur film, and then write her a letter telling her about it and asking if she would like to see it.

That is why I was never able to have an opinion about the Peter Brook film; I had the whole *mise en scène* of the book in my head. I had imagined all the characters, for one thing. For another, unity of place seemed vital to me: the whole film—the whole of *my* film—was to have taken place in the café. So when I saw Brook's hero and heroine walking through the town it seemed all wrong. I had thought of the hero as an older man, someone like Alain Cuny, so Belmondo seemed wrong too. This may sound silly to you, but I had such a clear picture of the film in my head. Of course, Belmondo was wonderful in the film, and Jeanne Moreau, too (I had thought of using her). For me, Brook's masterpiece, however, is the *Marat-Sade*. His solution of the problems of filming a play was totally convincing.

The ritual last question: now that you have abandoned HARRY DICKSON, what are your plans?

I just don't know; I'm looking. Maybe a comedy? Something different, in any case.

You know, I still find it hard to get used to the fact that what I have to say is of any great importance. I can talk about one of my films, but to talk about the *oeuvre*, or the context—that still surprises me. What I mean is that I am still surprised



when people ask ME the same questions they ask Fellini or Bergman. And yet when I look at the books written about me, they're the same as those written about Bergman or Fellini. The stills are the same size, the questions are often the same—though the answers aren't always. I suppose it all has to do with the fact that I don't feel any older now than I did twenty years ago. Except that time goes by much faster. You do less and less in a day; you have more and more little things to do, so the days seem to get shorter. I used to read three novels a week when I was eighteen; now I read one a month. Where's the difference?

## CANNES FESTIVAL

*continued from page 138*

the Russian soldiery in a not very attractive light. Alas, he then added a final Fellini-esque sequence taking place in some metaphysical limbo-land. It only lasts about twenty minutes, but it's a shame it comes at the end; for the first two-thirds of the film are pretty marvellous.

Oh, you can complain about the fancy camerawork (colour, monochrome, filters, zooms, telephoto, distorting angles), and no one hates this kind of fancy-Dan stuff more than I do, but here it works. For one thing it was a relief to find a truly cinematic sensibility at work. For another, this was the first time the attempt to stylise reality in terms of naive painting really came off (there were several other disastrous examples from Eastern Europe in the Festival). It works, I think, because he has not just tried for the quaint prettiness of the genre, but has also conveyed the brutality, the coarse horror of much peasant art. This stylisation serves to detach the spectator from the horrifying subject-matter, but at the same time I think it intensifies it. Jakubisko was his own lighting cameraman, and the colour imagery is of the kind that sweeps you off your feet.

Cannes seems in recent years to have given up full-dress retrospectives. Just as well this year, with the fantastic number of new films shown either in competition, or in the Critics' Week, the Directors' Fortnight (they showed sixty features) or the Film Market. But one of the pleasantest afternoons was the one organised by the Cinémathèque Française devoted to Renoir. An hour and a half of beautifully chosen extracts reminded one that Renoir is one of the cinema's supreme creators, and also served as a kind of standard against which to judge the films of the Festival.

RICHARD ROUD

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *If . . . , Oh! What a Lovely War*.  
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Adventures of Gerard, The Sailor from Gibraltar, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Mademoiselle, Stolen Kisses*.  
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.  
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *Otley*.  
M-G-M for *The Fixer*.  
WARNER-PATHE for *The Illustrated Man*.  
WARNER/SEVEN ARTS for *The Rain People*.  
RANK/UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *Isadora*.  
UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *Three into Two Won't Go*.  
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *La Guerre est Finie*.  
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Everything for Sale*.  
HUNTER FILM SERVICES for *Simon of the Desert*.  
C.I.R.O. for *Hell in the Pacific*.  
HUNGAROFILM for *Silence and Cry, Confrontation*.  
HUNGAROFILM/CONTEMPORARY for *My Way Home*.  
HUNGAROFILM/CONNOISSEUR for *The Red and the White*.  
PROMECO FILM for *Andrei Roublev*.  
CHARTOFF/WINKLER for *Leo the Last*.  
VILLANI FILM for *Cronaca di un Amore*.  
FILMS DU CARROSSE for *Ma Nuit chez Maud*.  
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Fantômas, L'Inhumaine, Bonne Chance, Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne, La Règle du Jeu, Casque d'Or, Le Trou*, photograph of the Granada Cinema, Tooting.

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# FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

**\*ALL NEAT IN BLACK STOCKINGS** (Warner-Pathé) Mixture of shaggy dog and swinging British cinema, saved by excellent performances from Victor Henry as the window-cleaner with a yen for birds, Jack Shepherd as the friend he shares them with, and Susan George as the girl who is shared but shouldn't have been. (Clare Kelly, Anna Cropper; director, Christopher Morahan. Eastman Colour.)

**BABY LOVE** (Avco Embassy) Based on Tina Chad Christian's lurid novel about a teenage nymphomaniac whose need for security leads her to seduce each member of the respectable bourgeois family that adopts her, Alastair Reid's disquieting film manages—despite its flashy surfaces and fashionable nods—to transcend the inherent sensationalism of its story. (Ann Lynn, Keith Barron, Linda Hayden. Eastman Colour.)

**\*\*\*BAISERS VOLES** (United Artists) The third chapter in Truffaut's biography of the boy from *Quatre Cents Coups*. Beautifully observed, deceptively simple account of a sentimental education. (Jean-Pierre Léaud, Delphine Seyrig, Claude Jade. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

**BEFORE WINTER COMES** (Columbia) David Niven beset by moral dilemmas as the officer in charge of a refugee transit camp conveniently situated on the border between the British and Russian zones of Occupied Austria. Topol on hand as a multilingual interpreter several sizes larger than life, but neither he nor the rest of the cast survive the Cold War platitudes. (John Hurt, Anna Karina; director, J. Lee Thompson. Technicolor.)

**\*BOSTON STRANGLER, THE** (Fox) Richard Fleischer lets loose an irritating barrage of split screen techniques in his screen dramatisation of Gerold Frank's thoroughly documented book about the sex maniac (13 murders and nearly 2000 rapes) whose activities terrified Massachusetts' female population just a few years ago. Tony Curtis makes what he can of the title role, hampered by a script that reduces real complexity to classic screen-fiction schizophrenia. (Henry Fonda. DeLuxe Colour, Panavision.)

**ESCALATION** (Gala) Profound philosophical themes (capitalism corrupts, crime begets crime) vie with the psychedelic trimmings and slick, swinging surfaces of Roberto Faenza's tragic-farce about an Italian hippie transformed by his experience of high finance and a frigid wife into a murderous businessman. The result is a confused tedium that not even Luigi Kuveiller's stunning photography can disguise. (Claudine Auger, Lino Capolicchio. Eastman Colour.)

**\*\*FIXER, THE** (M-G-M) Frankenheimer uses a Hungarian unit and a largely British cast to create a respectable but faintly uneasy tribute to Dalton Trumbo. Alan Bates surprisingly good as the Jewish non-political prisoner in pre-Revolutionary Russia, suffering horrible indignities while becoming a national symbol. Slow, violent, but suffused with a gloomy integrity. (Dirk Bogarde, Hugh Griffith, Elizabeth Hartman. Metrocolor.) Reviewed.

**\*FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED** (Warner-Pathé) This time the good Doctor is busy transplanting brains rather than simply resuscitating his pet monster. Otherwise it's the usual Hammer pot-pourri of blood and pickled organs, blowing up quite nicely into holocaust in the last ten minutes. (Peter Cushing, Freddie Jones; director, Terence Fisher. Technicolor.)

**GENTLE LOVE** (Cinecenta) Tiresome non-story about a television director and a fashion model drifting round Paris. Script and style straight out of the glossy magazines; not quite as sugary as Lelouch but irritatingly arch. (Karen Blanguernon, Frédéric de Pasquale; director, Dirk Sanders. Eastman Colour.)

**\*\*GURU, THE** (Fox) James Ivory continues his gently mocking view of the Indian scene, with Michael York as an English pop singer learning the sitar from an Indian musician who expects to be his guru in the fullest sense of the word. Charming, atmospheric, and often very funny in its leisurely way. (Rita Tushingham, Utpal Dutt, Madhur Jaffrey. DeLuxe Colour.) Reviewed.

**\*\*HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER, THE** (Warner-Pathé) Clumsy but curiously appealing adaptation of the Carson McCullers novel about the Deep South oddballs and misfits who gravitate round a deaf-and-dumb stranger (Alan Arkin), drawing comfort and friendship from his silence. (Sondra Locke, Percy Rodriguez; director, Robert Ellis Miller. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

**ICE STATION ZEBRA** (M-G-M) Blockbuster adaptation of Alistair MacLean's novel about a Cold War confrontation at the North Pole. Not really John Sturges territory, but it's all good clean fun and visually quite impressive despite some plastic ice cubes and washing-powder snow. (Rock Hudson, Ernest Borgnine, Patrick McGeehan. Metrocolor, Super Panavision.)

**IF HE HOLLERS, LET HIM GO! (C.I.R.O.)** Risible blend of melodrama and message, about an upstanding Negro wrongly convicted of rape and murder who breaks jail and pits his moral and intellectual superiority against the nasty and none too bright whites. (Raymond St. Jacques, Dana Wynter, Kevin McCarthy; director, Charles Martin. Eastman Colour.)

**\*\*\*ILLUSTRATED MAN, THE** (Warner-Pathé) Despite occasional lapses and uncertainties, striking attempt to interpret rather than adapt Ray Bradbury's book, with the Illustrated Man becoming a sort of new Adam in a new world. Excellent sets and performances. (Rod Steiger, Claire Bloom, Robert Drivas; director, Jack Smight. Technicolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.

**\*\*\*\*IMMORTAL STORY, THE** (Hunter) Orson Welles' masterly and poetic evocation of the Isak Dinesen story about a literal-minded merchant who tries to make an old travellers' tale come true and discovers to his cost that legend can be stronger than reality. Beautifully composed photography by Willy Kurant and memorable performances from the entire cast. (Orson Welles, Jeanne Moreau, Roger Coggio, Norman Eshley. Eastman Colour.)

**\*INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE** (Paramount) Slightly less static than the original play, Anthony Page's film—its style a cross between Kafka and Carnaby Street—still fails to provoke much sympathy for John Osborne's angry older man. Nicol Williamson recreates his skilful stage performance as the solicitor on the verge of breakdown, but the tireless exchange of home truths that makes up the script leaves one more indifferent than alienated. (Eleanor Fagan, Jill Bennett.)

**ITALIAN JOB, THE** (Paramount) The crime of the century—yet again—with Noël Coward as a patriotic crook masterminding a bullion robbery from his jail cell (to constant strains of 'Rule Britannia') and Michael Caine executing it in Turin after causing a city-wide traffic jam. Much less enjoyable than *They Came to Rob Las Vegas*. (Raf Vallone, Benny Hill, Tony Beckley; director, Peter Collinson. In colour, Panavision.)

**\*KILLING OF SISTER GEORGE, THE** (C.I.R.O.) Sometimes striking, more frequently lumbering, adaptation of Frank Marcus' play about an ageing actress who loses her girl-friend and her part in a long-running TV series in one fell swoop. Well acted but not entirely certain whether it intends to sensationalise or not. (Beryl Reid, Susannah York, Coral Browne; director, Robert Aldrich. Metrocolor.)

**LOVE BUG, THE** (Disney) Quite engaging little Disney fantasy about a magic car with a mind of its own. Pleasantly photographed in turn-of-the-century San Francisco, and the whimsy is mostly kept well in check. (Dean Jones, Michele Lee, David Tomlinson; director, Robert Stevenson. Technicolor.)

**MACKENNA'S GOLD** (Columbia) Unbelievably whiskey melodrama about a legendary valley of gold, with most of the lusting guest stars killed off mercifully soon, but Omar Sharif and Gregory Peck surviving to beat each other up at intervals and exchange some of the most creaking dialogue in years. (Telly Savalas, Camilla Sparv; director, J. Lee Thompson. Technicolor, Super Panavision.)

**\*\*NIGHT THEY RAIDED MINSKY'S, THE** (United Artists) A tortuous plot and some improbable casting (Britt Ekland as a fundamentalist virgin, Jason Robards and Norman Wisdom as a pair of third-rate comedians) happily overshadowed by exemplary art direction and a convincing recreation of old burlesque

routines and New York's Lower East Side in the 1920s. (Director, William Friedkin. DeLuxe Colour.)

**\*\*OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR** (Paramount) Richard Attenborough's mammoth version of the Joan Littlewood musical play. Worthy, intelligent, occasionally inspired; but with half the British acting profession lending their services and the war spreading out over the Sussex Downs the bite of the original is here more of a bark. (Joe Melia, John Mills, Ralph Richardson, John Gielgud. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**\*\*OTLEY** (Columbia) Young layabout gets mixed up with international spy ring, glamorous secret agents and all that. Old stuff, but given a crisp new sheen by Tom Courtenay's performance, a very funny script, and brightness all round. (Romy Schneider, Alan Badel, James Villiers; director, Dick Clement. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

**ROSEANNA** (Cinecenta) Leaden Swedish thriller about a girl found strangled in a canal. Starts casebook style with facts, photographs and much police interrogation, ends in Hitchcockery with psychopath hovering over police-woman heroine. Difficult to care much either way. (Keve Hjelm, Hans Ernbäck, Diane Varsi; director, Hans Abramson. Eastman Colour.)

**\*\*\*\*SECRET CEREMONY** (Rank) Joseph Losey's superb, crystalline study of the cannibalistic relationship between two women—a young girl and the ageing whore she annexes as the reincarnation of her dead mother—in the weird, haunting setting of a mansion of memories. (Mia Farrow, Elizabeth Taylor, Robert Mitchum. Technicolor.)

**\*\*\*\*SIMON OF THE DESERT** (Hunter) 45-minute masterpiece from Buñuel: a wickedly funny, stingingly anti-clerical, even apocalyptic vision centering on the serenely silly saint who has been sitting atop his pillar for six years, six weeks and six days to no very useful end. (Claudio Brook, Silvia Pinal.) Reviewed.

**\*\*SINFUL DAVEY** (United Artists) John Huston doing what comes naturally in a blarneying tale of the Highlands (begorrah!) and the *Tom Jones* adventures of a pious young highwayman (nicely played by John Hurt). Meandering and missing fire, but really rather engaging. (Pamela Franklin, Nigel Davenport, Ronald Fraser. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**SKIDOO** (Paramount) Preminger's apology for yet another minority group, this time the hippies, whose flower-throwing love-ins are presented as the only viable alternative to the cut and thrust of capitalism and crime. Comic in intention, the film travels but never really arrives, while the prominence in the plot of LSD provides the excuse for some crude visual fantasies. (Jackie Gleason, Carol Channing, Groucho Marx. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**SONS OF SATAN** (Warner-Pathé) Fashionably sadistic story of two gangster brothers feuding their way across the New Mexico desert. Notable only for a splendidly blowzy performance from Rita Hayworth as their whisky-swilling, dotting mother. (Giuliano Gemma, Klaus Kinski; director, Duccio Tessari. Technicolor.)

**\*SOUTHERN STAR, THE** (Columbia) Engagingly straightforward spoof on jungle sagas, with marvellously double-dyed villains (Orson Welles, Ian Hendry), sad sack hero (George Segal) and busty heroine (Ursula Andress) nobly braving the hippopotami to swim to the rescue. Puzzle: why did the critics take it so seriously? (Johnny Sekka, Harry Andrews; director, Sidney Hayers. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

**\*\*\*THEOREM** (Eagle) Pasolini's riveting analysis of the disintegration of an Italian bourgeois family after a visitation from a contemporary Saviour. Christ and Marx walk hand in hand in a visually stunning, clinically cool dissection of the symbols of self-destruction. (Terence Stamp, Silvana Mangano, Massimo Girotti. Eastman Colour.)

**\*\*THEY CAME TO ROB LAS VEGAS** (Warner-Pathé) Splendidly photographed international co-production that—appropriately—demonstrates the impersonality of crime in the Space Age with fallible humans battling unsuccessfully against their infallible inventions, dwarfed equally by concrete cities and untamed deserts. (Gary Lockwood, Jack Palance, Lee J. Cobb; director, Antonio Isasi. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

**WHERE'S JACK?** (Paramount) Careful and tolerably spirited account of the clash between nice highwayman Jack Sheppard (Tommy Steele) and nasty thief-taker Jonathan Wild (Stanley Baker). Somewhat drenched in period flavour and junketings. (Alan Badel, Dudley Foster; director, James Clavell. Eastman Colour.)



# new cinema club

## SIGHT AND SOUND *don't mention it!*

Funny how this is the only film magazine that hasn't noticed our existence yet. Still, we've only been going a couple of years. And we don't mind buying space to keep readers in touch with new cinema. From July we present our most explosive season yet—

## THE LOADED SCREEN

It includes the premiere of Maurice Hatton's **PRAISE MARX—AND PASS THE AMMUNITION**, a film as revolutionary as its theme. It launches participation cinema, represented by an evening of film events by John Lennon and Yoko Ono and programmes of the extraordinary work of Mike Myers and Denis Postle, whose **TATTOOISTS** are guaranteed to get under everyone's skin. **DAVID HOLZMAN'S DIARY** also probes the film maker's relationship to his medium. And Allan King's **GROUP THERAPY** shows the Warrendale staff grappling with their own conflicts.

Nothing could be more loaded than our premieres of two films from Czechoslovakia—Ewald Schorm's **RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL** and Zbynek Brynych's **THE FIFTH RIDER IS FEAR**. From Yugoslavia, two disturbing films by Pavlovic and Petrovic, **THE RATS WAKE UP** and **TRIO**.

More from the underground, including a new all-night show "An American Eye-Opener", chosen by Dave Curtis who ran the Arts Lab cinema with tremendous flair and has now joined the New Cinema Club staff. An elusive example of yesterday's underground, Hans Richter's **DREAMS THAT MONEY CAN BUY**. And more additions to the Forbidden Film Festival. **STRIP, CAROUSELLA** and the uncut **THE AROUSING** demonstrate more of the British Board of Film Censors' sexual hang-ups.

And, of course, repeats for members who couldn't get in to **CHELSEA GIRLS, THE TRIP, WILD ANGELS, TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS**, an evening with Steve Dwoskin, **LA COLLECTIONNEUSE, THE THEATRE OF MR. AND MRS. KABAL, FACE TO FACE, WARRENDALE, LOVE STORY, BARON MUNCHHAUSEN, RELATIVITY, SCORPIO RISING, NOTES FOR A FILM ABOUT DONNA AND GAIL, ECHOES OF SILENCE, WEEKEND** and our all-night orgy of new underground movies.

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